



# Sex, Relationships, Dating, Marriage, Singleness and God

## Beliefs about LOVE – A Self Quiz<sup>a</sup>

*Please circle the correct answer, true or false*

1. I believe 'love at first sight' occurs between some people. *True or False*
2. I believe it is easy to distinguish real love from infatuation. *True or False*
3. I believe people who sincerely love each other will not fight and argue. *True or False*
4. I believe God selects *one* particular person for each of us to marry, and he will guide us together. *True or False*
5. I believe if a man and woman genuinely love each other then hardships and troubles will have little or no effect on their relationship. *True or False*
6. I believe it is better to marry the wrong person than to remain single and lonely throughout life. *True or False*
7. I believe it is not harmful to have sexual intercourse before marriage. If the couple has a meaningful relationship. *True or False*
8. I believe if a couple is genuinely in love that condition "is permanent lasting a lifetime. *True or False*
9. I believe short courtships (six months or less) are best. *True or False*
10. I believe teenagers are more capable of genuine love than are older people. *True or False*

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<sup>a</sup> Compare and discuss your answers to these questions with a friend

# 1 CORINTHIANS 7

## *studies*

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'1 Corinthians 7 may be a minefield for the unwary, but it is a gold-mine for the diligent...  
It would be no exaggeration to describe 1 Corinthians 7 as God's 'Marriage Guidance'  
John Richardson

## 1 CORINTHIANS 7 (ESV)

(1) 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. (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 be aflame 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.

(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) Wife, how do you know whether you will save your husband? Husband, how do you know whether you will save your wife?

(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 slave 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 slave is a freedman of the Lord. Likewise he who was free when called is a slave of Christ. (23) You were bought with a price; do not become slaves of men. (24) So, brothers, in whatever condition each was called, there let him remain with God.

(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. (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 (34) 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.

(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.

(39) 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 – Some background

In Acts 18 we discover that the church at Corinth (modern day Greece) was started by a missionary and Bible preacher named Paul with the help of some other Christians (e.g. Priscilla, Aquila, Silas and Timothy). Although in many ways a very gifted church, division, immaturity, pride and unfaithfulness seem to be very common among the Christians in Corinth (See 1:12, 3:1-4, 4:18-21 and 11:17-22).

In chapters 5 and 6 of 1 Corinthians however it would seem that sexual sin was also a big problem at Christ Church Corinth (e.g. incest and prostitution):

**(1) It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and of a kind that is not tolerated even among pagans, for a man has his father's wife.**

**(2) And you are arrogant! Ought you not rather to mourn? Let him who has done this be removed from among you. – 1 Corinthians 5:1-2**

**(13)... The body is not meant for sexual immorality, but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body. (14) And God raised the Lord and will also raise us up by his power. (15) Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I then take the members of Christ and make them members of a prostitute? Never! (16) Or do you not know that he who is joined to a prostitute becomes one body with her? For, as it is written, "The two will become one flesh." (17) But he who is joined to the Lord becomes one spirit with him. (18) Flee from sexual immorality. Every other sin a person commits is outside the body, but the sexually immoral person sins against his own body. (19) Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, (20) for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body. - 1 Corinthians 6:13-20**

The Christians in Corinth seem to tolerate sexual sin and so did not feel the need to include such matters in the things '*about which*' they wrote to Paul (see 7:1, 8:1, 12:1, 16:1). On the one hand some in the church at Corinth believed that the physical (*i.e. the body*) was not that important; the soul was what really mattered most. So incest, sex with prostitutes and other forms of sexual immorality were either indulged or tolerated.

Others in the church on the other hand and for related reasons, felt that sex was unspiritual, and so should not be engaged in even when the two people involved were married to one another. These people seem to be against sex in principle! This was reflected in a statement made by the Corinthians to Paul probably in a previous letter, and which Paul quotes back to them in vs.1 of chapter 7:

**"It is good for a man not to have sexual relations with a woman."**

It is important to stress that Christianity, God, Jesus and therefore Paul taught neither of these two extreme views. Christianity is anti-sexual immorality but pro-sex. Standing behind all that Paul says in 1 Corinthians 7 is the pattern God has already laid down for humanity in Genesis 2:24 regarding marriage and therefore sex.

**Therefore, a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. - Genesis 2:24**

Since God created two separate genders (*i.e. Male and female, Genesis 1:26-28*), according to the Bible sex or becoming '*one flesh*' with another person can only happen once two other things have taken place:

- 1. A public leaving of one family unit by one man and one woman to form their own new family unit** (*usually symbolised by a public wedding ceremony*)
- 2. The permanent 'holding fast' of that one man and one woman in a lifelong monogamous covenant relationship** (*i.e. marriage*)

The Bible takes sexual sin very seriously indeed. To sin sexually is to sin against one's own body. Almost every book in the NT has some kind of warning against sexual immorality. In other words, any sexual activity outside of a marriage relationship (*i.e. a public lifelong covenant relationship between one man and one woman*). Ultimately God will not tolerate our wilful and continuous rebellion or '*unrighteousness*' in this area:

**(9) Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality, (10) nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. (11) And such were some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God. - 1 Corinthians 6:9-11**

1 Corinthians 7:1-16 are addressed mainly to those who are currently married or have been married and are now single for whatever reason. Paul only begins addressing single people (*i.e. the betrothed or those who have never married*) in vs.25 of 1 Corinthians 7. And yet these verses (*vss.1-16*) have valuable things to teach single people about marriage and therefore sex. Part of the message to both single and married people could be summed up like this:

**Both marriage without sex and sex without marriage are unbiblical, unspiritual and therefore wrong or immoral.**

The purpose of this little booklet is to explore some of these issues (*i.e. sex, relationships, marriage, singleness, dating, etc*).

## 1 Corinthians 7:1-6

(1) 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. (6) Now as a concession, not a command, I say this.

1. From vs.1 what had the Corinthians written to Paul about and why?

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2. Does Paul agree with the statement in vs.1 by the Corinthians? In other words, is God and Christianity anti-sex? See vss.2-6!

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3. Why does Paul suddenly start referring to both husband and wife in vss.2-4? What assumption does he make? See notes on pg.6-7 above!

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*Verses 2-4 of 1 Corinthians 7 could be translated as follows:*

**(2) but because of sexual immoralities, let every husband go on having his own wife, and let every wife go on having her own husband. (3) To the wife the husband 'the debt' let him pay, and likewise also the wife to the husband. (4) The wife does not have authority (or power) over her own body but the husband does, and likewise also the husband does not have authority (or power) over his own body but the wife does.**



4. In marriage what are 'conjugal rights' or 'the debt' that a married couple are required to continually pay one another? See 7:3 above!

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5. What is the concession in vs.6; and why is there this concession according to vss.2-5?

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## THINK IT THROUGH

*From this passage, what would you say to a friend who is sleeping with their boy or girlfriend?*

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*True or false: It is ok to withhold sex from your husband or wife in order to teach them a lesson!*

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*In marriage, is it more spiritual to spend time praying together as a couple, than it is making love to one another?*

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Do you agree that sometimes 'it is good for a man not to have sexual relations with a women'? If so when and why? See also pg.6-7!

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## QUOTES TO THINK THROUGH

The order of the events – leaving, being united [holding fast] and becoming one flesh - is important; relationships are public and permanent before they become sexual. – **Nigel Pollock**

Long before we consider marrying someone-before we even have someone specific in mind to marry-we should think through the following points:

- *I will be responsible for the lifelong sexual satisfaction of my [husband or wife].*
- *This is an obligation on a par with the other obligations of marriage.*
- *To neglect this aspect of marriage is to deprive my [husband or wife] of something I owe them. It is the equivalent to cheating or defrauding them.*
- *To care for my [husband or wife's] sexual satisfaction will help keep them from temptation.* - **John Richardson**

Sex wasn't invented by Hollywood, Madonna, or some pervert in an internet chat room. Sex was created by an infinitely holy God, wreathed in blinding light and glory, surrounded by radiant, holy angels...Sex is the means by which children are conceived and marital intimacy expressed. Both are very important to God. When sexual union takes places in its proper context, in a spirit of giving [i.e. within marriage], the Creator smiles. – **Randy Alcorn**

According to the Bible, sex is not just about me – my appetite and my desires; it is about relationship. It is designed by God to be the pleasurable means by which [husband and wife] express their total commitment and love to one another. They are not limited to words or even flowers - they can say it with their bodies. We understand the concept of body language. A handshake is an expression of friendship...Sex is the most extreme form of body language. [Husband and wife are] naked and completely exposed before one another, and in their sexual union they are saying, 'I love you and I am completely committed to you for life' – at least that is what God intended to be communicated by sex. – **Vaughan Roberts**

## other parts of the Bible worth looking at

See also Song of Songs, Mark 7:21-23, Romans 13:12-13,  
Ephesians 5:3-4, 1 Thessalonians 4:3-8,  
Hebrews 12:16, 13:4, Jude 7, Revelation 21:8

## Study 2

## Dating and relating

### 1 Corinthians 7:1, 7-9

(1) Now concerning the matters about which you wrote: "It is good for a man not to have sexual relations with a woman..." (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 be aflame with passion

1. The word '*unmarried*' in vs.8 should be translated '*widowers*'. From vs.1 above why might the widows and widowers in the church at Corinth be putting off getting married? Think back to study 1.

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2. What specific situation is Paul the writer addressing in vss.8-9?

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3. From vs.7-9 what would you say to the person who thinks singleness is a disease that needs curing as soon as humanly possible? See vss.7, 17, 24, 28, 32-35 (pg.4-5) and Galatians 5:22-23!

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4. From vs.9 when should a Christian begin to seriously start thinking about getting married?

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5a. In the original vs.9 reads *'for it is better to marry than to be aflame' (or burn)*. The words *'with passion'* have been added. What is the word *'burn'* referring to? See 6:9-11 (pg.7) and 2 Corinthians 11:29?

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5b. Why is marriage seriously worth thinking about in the situation described in vss.8-9?

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## THINK IT THROUGH

*The answer to sexual temptation for the single unattached person is marriage and not self control! From vss.7-9 is this true or false?*

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*Consider the following statement: Since I struggle with lust, loneliness, romantic fantasies, low self esteem, masturbation and pornography, I need to just get married! Is that what Paul in vss.7-9 is recommending? Explain your answer!*

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*Consider the following statement: My girlfriend and I are struggling sexually but cannot get married until we have both finished university, and saved up enough money! How would you advise this couple based on vss.7-9?*

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*From vss.7-9, is it ok to arouse your boy/girlfriend sexually since you love each other and plan to get married one day? See 1 Thessalonians 4:3-8!*

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## QUOTES TO THINK THROUGH†

It is wise to avoid responding to any sexual attraction until you have had plenty of time to get to know one another as people. In marriage you are going to spend far more time talking to one another than having sex with one another and this should be reflected in your courtship. – John Richardson, pg.67

### **Fourteen tips for enjoying positive friendships with members of the opposite sex!**

1. If you're a Christian, date only Christians (see 2 Corinthians 6:14).
2. If you're a committed disciple, date only committed disciples.
3. Christ is with you all evening wherever you go and whatever you do.
4. Remember your date is your brother or sister [in Christ and], not your 'lover' (see 1 Timothy 5:1-2).
5. Go out in groups, not alone.
6. Focus on talk, not touch; conversation; not contact.
7. Avoid fast-moving relationships or instant intimacy.
8. Plan the entire evening in advance, with no gaps.
9. Avoid setups; never be alone on a couch, in a car late at night, in a house or bedroom.
10. Be accountable to someone about your purity.

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† You might want to take an extra week to think and talk through the issues raised by this section of study 2 by way of application (i.e. Quotes to think through, pages13ff).

11. Imagine your parents and church leaders are watching you through the window. God *is* watching (see Psalm 139, Jeremiah 16:17).
12. Write out your own standards and enforce them yourself; never depend on someone else.
13. Don't do anything with your date you wouldn't want someone else doing with your future [husband or wife].
14. Beware of the "*moral wear down*" of long dating relationships and long engagements. Once young people and parents agree on marriage, it's dangerous to wait longer than necessary (see 1 Corinthians 7:8-9).

Randy Alcorn, *The purity principle*, pg.75

### **The Petting Problem!**

The Bible is clear that sex before marriage is wrong. But what about petting? Or holding hands? Where do we draw the line? The God of the Bible does not answer these questions specifically. But he does give us clear principles, for example:

- ***Love your neighbour as yourself***
- ***Love one another as I have loved you***

The question we should always be asking is not 'how far can we go?' but rather 'are we being godly?' In the light of the 14 tips above it is seriously worth thinking about where you want to draw the line in a relationship beforehand.

***10. Full genital sexual intercourse***

***9. Oral sex***

***8. Mutual masturbation***

***7. Heavy petting***

***6. Petting***

***5. Prolonged kissing***

***4. Kissing***

***3. Cuddling***

***2. Embracing***

***1. Holding hands***

For some couples (*especially where one or both have been sexually active in a previous relationship*) it would be very unwise to go beyond no.1. Other couples might be able to go as far as no.4 and still remain godly. Anything higher than no. 4 however is asking for trouble. Consider the testimony below:

### **Have You Decided?**

**This testimony illustrates how we edge towards the danger zone by tiny steps:**

I know I should have spoken sooner: Things are a real mess with my boyfriend. You might think that I couldn't help myself: It would be nice to pretend that I got carried away in the heat of the moment. *But the truth is, I decided.*

I decided to start imagining in my head what it would be like to be close to him. I decided to invite him over when my flat mates were out. I decided to sit on the bed together to watch a video. I decided to let him sleep in the same room as me. I decided that it saved any hassle. I decided to get into bed beside him just for a short while just to say goodnight. I decided that I wanted to feel him close to me.

I decided that I wanted that intimacy. I decided to let him undress me, touch my breasts. I decided that it felt good that he liked my body that he found me attractive. I decided to allow him to guide my hand and show me what to do, what pleased him. I decided in my head it was OK because the Bible didn't clearly say it was wrong.

I decided that as long as we did not have penetrative sex it was OK. I decided that my feelings of guilt were due to lack of experience and naiveté rather than conscience. I decided to do it again another day. I decided to undo his jeans to feel closer to him. I decided it was OK to be naked together.

I decided to bring him to orgasm, to please him. I decided that it wouldn't really matter as I thought I'd marry him. I decided not to talk to anyone about it as I felt embarrassed and ashamed. I decided that as long as he wanted me physically the relationship would last. ***I decided to try to set some lines in the relationship.***

I decided to give in because it was the easier option and it made me feel good. I decided to stop repenting, it was hypocritical. I decided to go on holiday with him. I decided to sleep in the same bed. I liked the security, the intimacy. I decided to deceive my parents about our sleeping arrangements. I decided I didn't want to let go of what we had.

I decided not to talk to my friend when she asked about us. I decided she wouldn't understand and was scared of what she might think of me. I decided the physical closeness was what I wanted most. I decided not to go to church to give us more time together. I decided it didn't matter if he didn't tell me he loved me; what he did to me was more important. I decided it didn't matter if he hurt me, I would still love him and please him. I decided it would be better to spend more time on our own together than with friends. I decided to accept spending less time talking and more time arousing each other.

I know I should have spoken sooner: Things are a real mess with my boyfriend. You might think I couldn't help myself. It would be nice to pretend that I got carried away in the heat of the moment. *But the truth is, I decided.*

Quoted by Nigel D. Pollock, *The Relationships Revolution*, IVP, pg. 106f

### **How do I Know that I should get Married?**

I have known a sharp Christian fellow who was *uncertain* about whether it was real love until the day he asked the girl to marry him! On the other hand, some who fall in love quickly and feel certain that theirs is the real thing awaken later to discover that it is not, that they have been bowled over by a pretty face or a charming personality.

It has been largely not a spiritual love, but a natural fascination. Of course, the natural and physical must come into it, but where they predominate and fail to develop into anything more spiritual, trouble arises. How, then, can I be certain that I am really in love? The first important thing to say, I think, is that a satisfactory answer on paper is extraordinarily difficult. *So for some of you what I say now will not help very much. For others it may help a little.* Bryan Green has six test questions which clear the ground somewhat, and I would like to add a seventh. Here they are:

**1. How long have you known each other?** Long enough to study each other and understand something of each other's mind, habits and spirit?

**2. In what circumstances have you known each other?** Only in the more dramatic, spectacular and appealing (i.e. holidays, evenings out, social and religious functions, etc, etc.) or in the more mundane and ordinary ups and downs of life and everyday circumstances (i.e. at work, when sick, irritable, depressed, going through a dry patch spiritually, some trial, bereavement, etc, etc.) as well?

**3. What do you miss most when separated?** The physical, the mental or the spiritual? If it is the physical, then think again!



**4. What common interests and background have you?** The "thrill" of love may bring you together, but it won't hold you together. The comradeship of love will need to outlast many days in which there are no thrills.

**5. Do you share common ideals and faith?** The sort of love that can make a success of marriage must have these in common not only for your own happiness but also for any children you have. It will affect the day-to-day way you bring them up. To be pulling in two different directions where they are concerned, whether in things little or big, will be disastrous.

**6. Do you trust each other absolutely?** Life will bring its storms and you must have complete confidence in each other if you are to weather them successfully.

**7. Do you admire the other's character?** If you do not deeply respect and admire each other, forget about marriage. You are not in love.

Taken from Howard Guinness, *Sacrifice*, pg.24ff

## **other parts of the Bible worth looking at**

See also Genesis 39:1-23, Proverbs 5:1-23, 7:1-27,  
Ephesians 5:21-33, 2 Peter 2:1-22

## 1 Corinthians 7:1, 10-24

(1) Now concerning the matters about which you wrote: "It is good for a man not to have sexual relations with a woman."

(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.

(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) Wife, how do you know whether you will save your husband? Husband, how do you know whether you will save your wife?

(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 slave 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 slave is a freedman of the Lord. Likewise he who was free when called is a slave of Christ. (23) You were bought with a price; do not become slaves of men.

(24) So, brothers, in whatever condition each was called, there let him remain with God.

1. In vss.10-16 why might the couples involved be tempted to end their marriages? See vs.1.

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2. In vss.10-11 what point is Paul making about marriage? See Genesis 2:24 (pg.7) and Matthew 19:2-8.

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3. What point does Paul want the believer married to an unbeliever to understand in vss.12-16? See 1 Peter 3:1-7.

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4. Is Paul saying here that it is ok for a believer to marry or to date an unbeliever? See vs.39-40, 1 Kings 11:1-6 and 2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1.

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5. How does what Paul writes in vss.17-24 reinforce what he has said in vss.10-16? See vss.17, 24 and 26-28 (pg.5).

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6. Can you think of any exceptions to the rule stated in vss.17 and 24? See vss.1-9 (pg.4).

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## THINK IT THROUGH

*Based on vss.10-11, what would you say to the Christian couple who have decided to separate because they have drifted apart and have very little in common after 5 years of marriage?*

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*Based upon vss.12-16, what should you say to a Christian friend who is desperately unhappy and wants to divorce an unbelieving partner?*

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*A good Christian friend of yours is dating an unbeliever. What advice would you give to him/her based upon your answer to questions 3 and 4 above?*

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*Based on this passage, what would you say to a single unattached friend who is desperate to get married and discontent being single?*

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## QUOTES TO THINK THROUGH

### **Staying as you are**

Rather than worrying about *changing* our lives, we should concentrate on *living* them. – John Richardson, pg.51

### **The permanence of marriage**

Below are the words one husband said and then wrote down to his wife a short while before they were married: 'I want you to understand and be fully aware of my feelings concerning the marriage covenant which we are about to enter. I have been taught at my mother's knee, and in conformity to the word of God, that marriage vows [cannot be violated], and by entering into them I am binding myself absolutely and for life. The idea of estrangement from you through divorce through any reason at all will never, at any time, be permitted to enter my thinking. I'm not naive on this. On the contrary I am fully aware of the possibility, unlikely as it now appears, that mutual incompatibility or other unforeseen circumstances could result in extreme mental suffering. If such becomes the case I am resolved, for my part, to accept it as a consequence of the commitment I am now making, and to bear it, if necessary, to the end of our lives together'. - Anonymous

### **The difference: a wedding and a marriage**

...the wedding is the entrance into marriage. The wedding ceremony is not an end in itself...The wedding is a beautifully decorated doorway into a house. The substance is found beyond the doorway in the house, which is the marriage relationship of husband and wife. – Nancy Wilson

### **Unfaithfulness in marriage**

I know my father loved my mother when he married her; but I am not sure whether he had thought things through. His commitment to the situation didn't really match the measure of his love. Soon after their wedding the marriage began to crumble. He spent most evenings away; leaving her alone to look after two sons, and she became quite bitter: Over two decades later; through much anger; agony and victimization of each other; they are still together; only waiting till my younger brother goes to university before they get divorced. I'm sure they still love each other somewhere deep down, but there is too much pain and fear to make up the difference. (Simon, aged 20)

## **Faithfulness in marriage**

Being faithful in the little things means we keep appointments, follow through on projects, and keep our promises-the small ones as well as large ones. Faithfulness in the small things extends to marriage. Most people define faithfulness in marriage in terms of sexual fidelity, but faithfulness means far more. It means that you build up and encourage your spouse; you appreciate and applaud your spouse. It means that you make decisions with your spouse's highest good in mind, not your own selfish desire. Faithfulness in marriage means that you don't spend money on things you have agreed not to spend money on and that you "love, honor, and cherish" your spouse in the way you speak to her. It means you treat your spouse at home the same way you treat your spouse in public. - Michael Youssef

## **A Christian going out with a non-Christian**

It was inconceivable to me that I would ever go out with someone who was not a Christian. Jesus was so important to me that being involved with someone who did not share in this friendship with him was impossible. My faith was not just a matter of preference or of interest: it was everything to me. I knew a number of women in our church whose husbands were not Christians, and I saw the conflict this caused in their use of home and money, and the way they brought up their children. I knew that light and darkness could not have fellowship together: I knew that I should not be unequally yoked with an unbeliever (2 Corinthians 6:14-15). All these things were clear to me, and I still agree with them all. Yet I find myself involved with a guy who is not a Christian. I never thought I would get into this position, and am not sure exactly how I did. (Sally, aged 20)

## **A Christian marrying a non-Christian**

Marrying a non-Christian is disobedience... You can't really expect effective evangelism to be the fruit of disobedience. A friend of mine has discovered this to his cost. This friend gave his life to Christ while studying in [England]. Subsequently, he returned home to resume the friendship he once enjoyed with a non-Christian girl. 'I know what the Bible says about not marrying an unbeliever. I just like her, that's all.'

But he did marry her. When I visited them in their own home, I asked what marriage had done to his faith. A shadow seemed to pass over his face and his eyes grew sad and he admitted: 'I haven't been to church once since my wedding day. I never read my Bible these days and scarcely ever pray'.

I looked out of the window and watched his small children playing in the garden. 'And the children?' They know nothing whatsoever about the Lord' [he replied]. How do you feel; deep down inside, I mean?' In reply to this question

this young man admitted to the inner sadness, the yawning emptiness which no-one and nothing can fill. 'My faith really mattered to me. Jesus really mattered to me.'

This man's love for his wife has not cooled. But he has learned, the hard way, that God's instructions are both loving and wise. When we disregard them there is a price to be paid. – Joyce Huggett

### **A myth: The gift of singleness**

There is not a '*gift of singleness*' in the sense of a psychological constitution which means enjoying being celibate and living on your own, any more than there is a '*gift of marriage*' which means having a wonderful sex-life and always enjoying the company of your spouse and children. Of course, some people are like this, but enormous numbers (perhaps most) simply aren't. The 'gift' we have from God referred to in 1 Corinthians 7 is our life situation; our total selves and the context in which we are placed. The response called for is to trust and serve [God] in that context and so become more like Christ. – John Richardson

## **other parts of the Bible worth looking at**

See also Genesis 2:18-25, 29:31ff,  
Proverbs 31:10-31, 1 Timothy 3:1-13, 1 Peter 3:1-7

## Study 4

## Marriage vs. Singleness

### 1 Corinthians 7:1, 25-40

1 Now concerning those matters about which you wrote: "It is good for a man not to have sexual relations with a woman." ... (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.

(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, (34) 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.

(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.

1. Why might the single person (*i.e. the betrothed or the person who has never married*) in Corinth be uncertain about whether to get married or not? See vs.1 and vss.36-38.

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2. What point is Paul trying to get such people to understand in vss.28-35? See vss.26, 28, 31, 33-34 and Matthew 22:30.

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3. Why is it seriously worth making the most of being single according to Paul? See vss.7, 29-34 and Matthew 19:12, 22:30.

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4. In vss.32-35 is Paul saying that married people won't be single-minded in their devotion to God? See Psalm 86:11.

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5. From vs.36 when should a Christian begin to seriously think about getting married? See vs.8-9.

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6. Why did Paul feel the need to write '*being under no necessity*' in vs.37? Think again about the context he was writing into!

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## **THINK IT THROUGH**

*A friend of yours is adamant that being single is better than being married? Basing your answer on 1 Corinthians 7, what would you say to help them to have a more balanced view?*

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## QUOTES TO THINK THROUGH

### **Where girls fall**

Not just sex, but romance too. This is where we girls fall down. The romantic idea of being 'in love' forever just like the fairytales imply is also thrown at us from all sides. All we have to do is find it. So we go looking for it around every corner, in every friendship with a member of the opposite sex. And do we find this fulfilling, overpowering, never-ending passionate love? Of course not, because God is the only one who can supply love like that. – Fiona Cooper

### **Choosing marriage or staying single**

Someone once said *'a woman is a great help to a man in all the problems a bachelor never has'*. Do you agree or disagree. Discuss your answer with someone!

### **Singleness or compromise**

Single woman outnumber marriageable men by 7.3 million in the United States. And most of the available ones are not in church. So unless we disobey God outright by marrying a non-Christian, let's face it: many of us will never marry. I have yet to hear this fact bluntly stated at any seminar I have ever attended... Well-meaning friends tell us to believe God for a mate. But God doesn't promise us that we will ever marry. He promises us himself. – Julia Duin

### **The myth: married people happier than single people**

There is a general myth that you are happier in a relationship than out of one; that you are more fulfilled with a partner. All of this is tied up with the expectation of others, that if you are in a relationship you will be having sex. Coming at issues from a Christian perspective raises quite a few eyebrows and it is difficult to maintain integrity. (Simon aged 23)

### **Advice to single and married people**

Married people, please pray for the singles you know to stand firm, not to fall into temptation and to remain celibate. Pray for their spiritual lives to flourish and for them to find their satisfaction in God alone. Single people, make sure you are accountable to someone for your walk with God. Find a friend, single or married, who you can be completely honest with about your feelings and struggles. Bring it all to God and make it a goal to find satisfaction in him alone. – Fiona Cooper

Getting married means having less time, less freedom but more responsibility. - Anon

**other parts of the Bible worth looking at**  
See also Ecclesiastes 12:13-14, Matthew 6:25-34, 10:34-39,  
24:36ff, Mark 8:34-38, Luke 14:25-33

## **Books worth reading:**

*Vaughan Roberts:* Distinctives, **Battles Christian's face**  
*John Richardson:* **God, sex and marriage**  
*Shannon Ethridge:* **Every woman's battle**  
*Arterburn & Stoeker:* **Every man's battle**  
*Joshua Harris:* **I kissed dating goodbye**  
*Randy Alcorn:* **The purity principle**  
*Jensen & Payne:* **Pure sex**  
*Linda Marshall:* **Pure**

## **Websites worth looking at:**

*Internet viewing accountability:* [www.covenanteyes.com](http://www.covenanteyes.com)  
[www.xxxchurch.com](http://www.xxxchurch.com)

*Pure course:*

[www.uccf.org.uk/students/planning-for-your-cu/pure](http://www.uccf.org.uk/students/planning-for-your-cu/pure)



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