

1 Corinthians Class 9 Transcript

Greetings, and welcome back to FI Online.

This is class number 9 in our series on Paul's first epistle to the Corinthians.

We appreciate you joining us once again this evening. We always appreciate the questions that you turn in.

We received one question from class number 8, so let's begin by addressing that. It's a very short question and answer.

1 Corinthians 6 verse 9 mentions *homosexuals* and *sodomites*. How does the Bible distinguish between the two?

Paul actually uses two different Greek words in this verse. The more scholarly sources defined these two words as "the two partners in a male homosexual relationship." For the sake of propriety, many translators struggled to translate those words in a way that captures the sense without being too graphic and specific. And for exactly that same reason, I will choose not to be any more specific here either.

Some of the less literal commentaries have chosen to translate the first word as "effeminate" and the second word as "homosexual."

Here is what *William Barclay* says in his commentary about the first word:

The word literally means "those who are soft and effeminate; those who have lost their manhood and live for the luxuries of (secret and perverse) pleasures. It describes what we can only call a kind of wallowing in luxury in which a man has lost all resistance to pleasure.

So, the words are very graphic, and I think, again, as we said for the sake of propriety, that's as close as we need to come. We recognize that God is saying this is an inappropriate kind of relationship. As we said last time, this is primarily focusing on two males, although, the subject of lesbianism is also covered in the book of Romans. So, we see the principle that God created marriage between one man and one woman, and that's the way He intended it to be. And, we'll continue on with that this evening as well.

But, as always, we want God's guidance and blessing upon our session, so we want to go before Him and ask a prayer that He will bless this particular class.

So, if you will, please bow your heads and join me.

[Prayer]

[3:35]

As we said, we are getting into class number 9 in our series, and we made it last time almost through the end of **1 Corinthians chapter 6**. I would like to go back and pick up just a little bit more. And remember in **chapter 6**, we talked about Paul was very upset early on, talking about people taking one another to court before people who don't even know God's way and trying to get a just settlement when men's concepts of justice and God's concept of justice are very, very different.

So, Paul was very upset about this taking place. And he talked further about how, when people face a situation of difficulty—resolving a problem between brethren—that sometimes we have to be the one who's willing to take a loss for the sake of unity, for the sake of staying together with our brother and

maintaining that relationship. Sometimes we're the ones who are expected to go the extra mile in working these things out.

So, as he was explaining that, Paul went forward and talked about those unrighteous people who will not inherit the Kingdom of God. And he lists at the very beginning of that—though other subjects are covered as well—various forms of sexual immorality. And, as our question earlier talked about that, it specifically covered certain aspects of it that were very common in society of that day, and the point that he was making was: “You obviously know that people who are living in these ways will not inherit the Kingdom of God. But, if you are being unrighteous in your treatment of your brother, then you're in the company of the unrighteous, and you will not inherit, either.” That's going to be important as we go on. In fact, as I hope to show you as we go a little further in this class, this leads very directly into the subject that we find in the next chapter.

But, let's finish up here first, because there are some very important concepts. Evidently there were individuals—because in that society one of the ideas that was very popular was that the physical body really didn't matter, so what you did with it was perfectly all right. And there were even, apparently, people who were justifying sexual immorality by saying: “Well, all they were doing was really just satisfying a desire which God built into us in the first place, so how could that be so bad?” Well, Paul made it very clear that: “No, your body doesn't belong to you. It belongs to Jesus Christ. He is the Head, and we are parts of that Body.”

[6:19]

So, he says in **verse 16 of 1 Corinthians chapter 6**:

[1 Corinthians 6:16] *Or do you not know that he who is joined to a harlot is one body with her? For “the two,” He says, (God says) “shall become one flesh.”*

He makes the point that there is a special bonding that takes place as a result of the sexual contact between people, and that's—if the contact is in the parameters within which God created it to be used properly—that's a good thing. But, if not, then it creates a bond with unrighteousness. And, in essence, he says, “How can you think it's okay for you—a part of the Body of Christ—to be united with a harlot? That's uniting Jesus Christ with a harlot. That's totally unacceptable.”

So he goes on to say here, as he talks about this “one flesh” concept, it's important for us to grasp the idea that this is not just talking in a physical way. It is telling us that through this very intimate and special relationship between two people, there is a bond created. We'll see more as we go a little further here.

Verse 17 He says: *But he who is joined to the Lord is one spirit with Him.*

So how can anyone say he had the mind of Jesus Christ, who would be revolted at the thought of being joined to a harlot, and still advocate the idea that it's perfectly all right for a Christian to do this? That's not the way that God thinks and certainly not the way a Christian should think.

In fact, Paul takes it to the next step.

He says in **verse 18**: *Flee sexual immorality. Every sin that a man does is outside the body, but he who commits sexual immorality sins against his own body.*

Now, what does he mean by that? What's he telling us there? I think there's a great deal here, and I think it's a very profound section that it's important for us to understand. The term “to flee” means “to move quickly away from something in order to avoid a danger.”

There are many aspects of sin that we are expected to confront and overcome. And there are many different aspects of that that we could look at and give many examples of it. But what he says here is that sexual immorality is something from which you should *flee*. Don't try to just see how close you can get and not give in. It's a very powerful pull. God has built it into us as a powerful pull for very right reasons, but if we're not careful, that pull can begin to control us instead of us controlling it.

[9:08]

So, we are told, "Flee from this; get far away from it." It tells us that if we're going to flee from sexual immorality—well, let's imagine that you were fleeing from, let's say, an enraged bear. When would you want to start the process of fleeing? When the bear was right there upon you, or as soon as you saw it? And I think most of us would recognize, "If a bear is in the area, I want to be out of that area." And that's the way we should approach sexual immorality. We don't just get as close as we can. We don't say: "Well, as long as I'm not x—whatever the behavior may be—then it's okay." No, it isn't. Get away from it. That's what's very, very important.

I don't think it's a great surprise to any of you that there is a great deal of emphasis on sexuality in our world today. Advertising is filled with it. All kinds of things are filled with it. Humor is filled with it. Comedians are continually talking about sexualized things. Many of the dramas that we see include this as well. It's **everywhere** in our society.

Now, admittedly, we don't have, as the people of Corinth did, temple prostitutes wandering the streets every night. But we have virtually the same thing, in a sense. We have all of those things available, and of course, on the Internet you can go to terrible places in seconds. So it is an admonition to the Christian: this is a powerful pull. *Flee from* this. Get away from it as quickly as you can, as far as you can. It should not be a part of your life lest you be tempted, and we'll see more about that as we go further as well.

But, notice what he says here: [**1 Corinthians 6:18**] *...Every sin that a man does is outside the body, but he who commits sexual immorality sins against his own body.*

What is he telling us? He's telling us, in a sense, that sexual activity changes a person at the very deepest levels of who and what they are. Now, again, if we're talking about sexuality within the marriage relationship, that's a good thing. You see, sexuality is the most intimate part of each and every one of us. And, being able to share the most intimate and sensitive part of who we are is something that we have to be very, very careful about. We don't do that just carelessly. We don't take this as something that doesn't really have much impact upon us. It's very important.

One of the things that we are told in the process of building relationships is: one of the best ways to build a relationship is what's called 'vulnerability.' That when we trust someone to the point where we make ourselves emotionally, mentally vulnerable, where that individual could actually hurt us if they choose to, but they don't choose to—we trust them. Those relationships, those bonds become much stronger.

Sexuality is at the very most intimate level of every one of us as a human being, and therefore we don't share that prior to marriage. But, when we share it within marriage, it creates a special bond between one man and one woman that makes that relationship unique in every respect over every other relationship they have. Remember, we said last time, marriage is the very first human relationship that God created, and He set it in motion with laws protecting that unique and special relationship.

[13:00]

One of the most terrible things about the sin of adultery is that it destroys that unique trust that **must** be

there for a husband and wife to be able to function properly in that very special relationship. When we see that trust destroyed, well, we try to forgive, and we try to heal things. But, sometimes when it's destroyed, the result is so terrible that you really can never recover it in the same way.

So, he is telling us here: "This is a unique relationship." Now, consider, when we read in the book of **Genesis** in **Genesis chapter 3 [4:1]**, especially the old *King James Version*, it says that *Adam knew his wife, and she conceived and bore a son*. All right, we look at that and sometimes we chuckle, "Yes, he knew her, that's for sure; she had a son." But, you realize that actually the Hebrew word that's used there, *yāda*, literally means "to know." It's a proper translation. And what it tells us is that when a man and a woman enter into this very special relationship and share this most intimate part of who they are with one and only one other person, that does enable them to know each other at a level that no one else knows them. They know each other at a level that even **they** didn't know each other before, and to violate the sanctity of that, the preciousness of that, is to destroy that whole relationship. It's extremely important.

So, God says, "When you commit that kind of a sin, you're destroying yourself. You're sinning against yourself." You're destroying this unique and special bond that God **wants** you to have, that God—I think most people long to share this very, very special bond with one person, and the person that you can trust, the person that you always can rely upon, the person that would never do something to harm you in any way. And God wants you to have that too. So He created this very special bond, this unique relationship, with much pleasure involved with it so that we can, as husband and wife, share that uniquely with one person.

In our society, sexuality has been cheapened. It's everywhere. It's viewed as if it's just another bodily function like hunger or thirst. And, the end result of that is that this unique human relationship is cheapened. Now, think about that. Marriage is at the core of the family, and the family is the building block of civilization. If you can undermine that unique and special relationship, you destroy the world. So who really wants to destroy the proper approach to sexuality? Satan is out there to destroy what God created.

[16:15]

Now, I want you to notice what he says as he goes a little bit further here. He talks about this—and again, I wanted to refer to another aspect of this, or an explanation.

I remember a number of years ago I was listening to a talk radio program by a well-known counselor, I guess you could say. It happened to be an Orthodox Jewish lady, in this case, who was well-respected. She shared with her listeners a letter that she had received. It was from a younger woman, and this young woman explained in her letter. She said:

Early on in my life I lived a very promiscuous life. She said, I couldn't even begin to tell you how many different men I was with over a period of several years, but, she said, eventually I realized that was a very hollow and empty way to live. And even more, I learned, I came to realize it was wrong, and I stopped doing that. I changed my life. I determined I would not live that way anymore. And, she said, as time went by, I met a very, very fine young man who was in fact everything I could ever hope to have in a husband. She said, we grew to love each other. We've been married, and, she said, I really, really love my husband. He is a wonderful man. I want so badly to respond to him, but every time he touches me, all I can think of is all those other men who mauled over me through all those years.

She was pleading: Is there a way so that I can finally respond to my husband properly? I love him. It's not a problem with him. It's all that I went through in the past. She said, I'm afraid. I'm afraid I'm going to lose this relationship because I don't have the ability to respond to my husband like I want to.

It was really a sad letter, but it made the point that when we are unfaithful in this very special area of life, we can destroy some of the most precious things that life has to offer. It's not just a physical matter. It's much more to it than that. And as we look at it, we also would have to think, forgiveness really is not what we are talking about here. Forgiveness is certainly possible. Forgiveness is available for the very worst things that people can do. But there is a huge difference between being "forgiven" and being "innocent." God wants us to be innocent. It's very important that we preserve that.

He goes on to say here in **verse 19**: *Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit which is in you, —*

Or, it says, *who is in you*, here. The Greek is: "the Holy Spirit within you" is simply what it says.

—which you have from God, and you are not your own?

That's an important concept for us to keep in mind, isn't it? When you become a Christian, you cease to belong to "you." You don't have the ultimate right to say what you're going to do with your life or, in the context here, your body. When you become a Christian, your body belongs to Jesus Christ, and He is the one who has the power to determine how you should use this. You hand everything over to Him.

[19:47]

Now, unlike the passage in [1 **Corinthians**] **chapter 3** where it talks about *you are the temple*—the "you" back there, it's plural—the passage—the word "you" in this passage is singular. So in other words, ultimately in **chapter 3**, he was saying: "All of us together are the temple, and we must not defile that temple." Here he's saying, in a slightly different metaphor: "You personally, your life, your body is to be a temple and a place for the Spirit of God to dwell. Your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit within you. And, you were given that from God. You didn't earn it. You didn't do anything to produce it in that way, and you don't belong to you. You belong to Him."

Verse 20 *For (Here's why you don't belong to you.) you were bought at a price; —*

An enormous price was paid for you and me. Now again, put this in the context we've said: we really believe 1 **Corinthians** was probably written around the Passover, Days of Unleavened Bread. So, in the context of people who are thinking about the Passover, the sacrifice of Christ, Paul makes this comment, *you were bought at a price*.

Do you remember what the price was that was paid for you? You were slaves in sin, and you were redeemed. You were bought at an incredible price.

(And) *—therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's*.

All of it belongs to God—the inner part, the outer part; it all belongs to God.

I would also tie in with this, 1 **Peter chapter 1 verses 18 and 19**.

Notice what Peter wrote. He says:

[1 **Peter 1:18**] *knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your*

aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers, 19 but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.

We must keep that perspective in our lives as well as we go forward, to remember, this is the price that was paid for you and me.

In **Matthew 20 verse 28**, Jesus is speaking and He said:

just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.”

We belong to Him. He paid the price for us, and we willingly agreed to that deal. We give ourselves up, and we belong to Him from this point forward.

[22:27]

Now, one of the things that I think is really fascinating, and I hadn't really thought about it until this morning as I was getting ready for this particular class. We move into **chapter 7**, and, we see in some ways a change, and yet we also see a continuity here. **Chapter 7** is going to talk about the marriage relationship. Well, what's the continuity? Paul's just been talking about individuals who see their bodies as belonging to them, and they can do whatever they want, and sexual immorality is not a big issue.

And now we're going to move into talking about the marriage relationship, and specifically, this chapter's going to talk about sexuality in a number of ways. It's going to bring out several things here that are important along those lines. And again, when you stop and think, if you go back to what we covered in one of our previous FI Online classes, the book of **Ephesians**—in **Ephesians chapter 5**, sexuality isn't really mentioned very much. It talks about other aspects of marriage, and that's very important. But, now we're going to recognize that it has a role to play that is important, and it's a part of God's creation. And, it makes the marriage relationship unique, different than any other human relationship, and, in some senses, I think we could say, more precious than any other human relationship. And if we're going to be Christians, we need to see it through that lens.

So let's pick it up here in **chapter 7 verse 1**.

[**1 Corinthians 7:1**] *Now concerning the things of which you wrote to me: It is good for a man not to touch a woman.*

Now, as we saw from early on, as Paul begins to address the Corinthians in this epistle that he sent to them, we figure out before long that actually they sent some questions to him. Up to this point, as far as we know, he hasn't specifically addressed any of their questions. He's used the opportunity to answer questions to address some of these other issues that lead up to this. But again, remember there is a continuity in this book. There was a problem with division, but the problem had causes. And one of those causes was pride. Frankly, I think we're going to see that as we go through **chapter 7**. One of the problems was—as we saw even in this last chapter—a principle that Paul brought out: all things may be legal, but that doesn't mean that all things build up, that all things are good. So, we're going to apply those principles as we go further here.

[25:10]

Now, they had obviously written this letter and sent it to him. So they're asking for Paul's input on something that they didn't feel they fully understood. Now there's certainly nothing wrong with that. Certainly nothing wrong with that. However, what we might read between the lines here is that probably some of these questions are dividing the Church, and people are saying: "Well, I think I'm right, and

you're wrong." And the others are saying: "No, I'm right, and you're wrong, so let's write to Paul and let's see who's right!" And Paul isn't going to be sucked into that. Paul is going to answer **what's** right, not **who's** right, because "who's right" divides. "What's right" should unite. So, he said, "Okay, you wrote these things," and he's answering the question.

Now, we don't know what the questions were. We can pretty well deduce certain things by listening to the answers. When he said this, well, they must've asked this question. It's kind of like listening to one side of a phone conversation—you probably can figure out at least part of what's being said on the other end.

Apparently the question that's being asked here has to do with what the relationship should be. "Is it acceptable—okay, if sexual immorality is wrong, if sex outside of the marriage relationship is wrong, then would it be better—now, *flee fornication*; flee all of these things—okay, if that's better, then why don't we all just strive to be celibate and not be married at all?" Or, perhaps—I think as we'll see a little further—there seemed to be some that felt that: "Okay, it's all right to get married because, after all, you can help each other out, and it's financially better and so on. But, maybe we should be celibate within marriage. You know, we're married, we live in the same house, but we are celibate."

So, Paul is addressing their question: "Is it okay for an individual to remain unmarried, or to be celibate in this way?" Okay, that's a very legitimate question. It's unclear whether Paul is actually quoting from their letter or not, but that's certainly a possibility. But when he says to *not touch a woman*, it was an idiom that basically meant to marry. "Is all right not to marry at all or not to get married?" So, this first question has to do with: "Is it necessary for a Christian to be married, or is it also acceptable to be single?"

Now, there are probably several reasons for that. There were Jews who believed, and taught, that it was contrary to God's purposes for mankind to remain single. They read the passage in **Genesis 2, verse 18**: *It is not good that man should be alone*. So, this must mean that God intends that everyone marry. And Paul—and therefore they interpreted as saying: "It's wrong not to marry. Everyone must do this." And in fact, at certain times early on—and this would probably be a part of those times—it was literally at the point that if a young Jewish man was not married by age 20, he was considered to be violating what God's commands were. That God commanded to be fruitful and multiply, and he wasn't doing that, so that's a violation.

[28:38]

Well, Paul is saying: "No, that's not exactly what the Scripture is saying. It's not saying that you **must** marry, that it is a requirement. It's perfectly acceptable to be single. It's perfectly acceptable to never marry." Now, I think most people don't want to stay in that state. Most people would like to have a mate to share life with, and that's perfectly normal. But there may be situations where individuals decide: "In my situation I think it might be best if I just remain single, and I'm okay with that. I can live with that."

Now, again, there were those who probably were saying, you know, "Well, wouldn't it be better just not to marry at all, because that way this sexual desire is never stirred up at all, and you are able to just go on." Paul is not saying that celibacy is the preferred way of life. When he says *it's good for a man not to touch a woman*, it basically means: it's acceptable; it's all right. It's a legitimate lifestyle if a person chooses to remain single. There's no problem with it. That's not violating God's intention. Now, he's not going to stop there. The answer didn't end in that one little spot, but he is making that point. It's perfectly acceptable to do that.

Now again, we will see as Paul wrote later on toward the end of his life—**1 Timothy 4** and **verse [1 and]**

3—he said that those who taught—who forbid people to marry were actually teaching a *doctrine of demons*. That’s not something that God supports, that somehow there’s something wrong with marriage, or you should seek to be celibate or live a kind of a monastic lifestyle your whole life. No, that’s not godly; that’s not what God expects. And he says that’s really a demonic idea to go that direction. But that again doesn’t mean you **must** marry.

There can be a whole variety of reasons why a person might choose to remain single in this life. In some cases, it’s simply a matter—they never found the person that they felt they could build a happy marriage with. There are people who are very fine people for whom that’s true. There are others who, for whatever reason—perhaps they have some kind of an inheritable disease—that they decide, “You know, I really don’t want to pass this along to another generation.”

There are all kinds of reasons why. There may be some people who just simply say, “I’m happy being single. I don’t have to answer to anyone but myself. If I want to go do something, I don’t have to tell someone else, and I just like being able to do that.” Okay, there’s nothing wrong with that. Marriage is intended to be a great blessing, but if it’s not a blessing for you, that’s all right; you’re not sinning. And Paul is saying that’s perfectly legitimate if a person makes that choice.

[1 Corinthians 7] verse 2 He says: *Nevertheless, because of sexual immorality, let each man have his own wife, and let each woman have her own husband.*

Now, obviously it’s not telling us that the primary reason for marriage is to keep from being sexually immoral. Marriage has a whole lot more to it than that. But it does tell us that there is a strain on those individuals—or at least certainly can be—upon individuals who are single and have the normal sexual desires that most people will have in their lives. It can be more difficult and especially in a society like Paul’s, where sexual immorality was readily available at any point, and in many ways, our own society as well.

[32:19]

So he said, it would be much better for you to be married, and, you don’t have that temptation in the same way. Those desires are met within the safety and security of the family, and therefore you’re not tempted outside of that. So he said: “That’s a good thing.” And for most people that’s better.

But I want you to also note something else here. He says: “Let **each** have their own; *let each man have his own wife. Let each woman have her own husband.*” In other words, sometimes in our society it’s portrayed as if men are so sexually driven and women never have such desires. No, God created sexual desire in both men and women. He intended it to be there. He intended it to be a good thing. It’s not a bad thing. Sexual desire is not wrong or evil or something to be ashamed of. It’s something that God created. He simply set parameters in which it can be exercised safely, and that parameter is within marriage. But he does make the point that both have these normal desires.

It should also be noted, something else. He doesn’t say: “Let each man have his harem and each woman have several men.” No, it’s *let each man have his own wife*—singular; *each woman have her own husband*—singular. Polygamy, some other kind of arrangement, that’s not what Scripture talks about. It’s very specific that God intends **one** individual with **one** individual—one man with one woman—to make it clearer—one man with one woman. That’s what is intended.

So, now he goes on to say: “Now, what about that relationship?”

Well, **verse 3**: *Let the husband render to his wife the affection due her, and likewise also the wife to her*

husband.

The word *affection* here is a little bit different word. It literally means (This is from the *Louw & Nida Lexicon*.), “a state of zeal based upon a desire to be involved in some activity or state.” Now, one of the other commentaries, I believe, or one of the other translations, talked about “due benevolence,” and it uses all kinds of different phrases here. But the idea is that when you are in this marriage relationship, having a “zeal,” a “desire” for the sexual aspect of that relationship is perfectly normal. And the husband needs to consider his wife’s needs. The wife needs to consider her husband’s needs, and at the same time to therefore respond to each other with that recognition that God intends this to be a part of a marriage relationship.

When it uses this phrase, *let him render to his wife the affection due her*, it makes the point that this is not something that he does out of just his own kindness. This is something that she has a **right** to expect. Likewise, he has that right to expect as well. When people enter into the marriage relationship, they have the right to assume that that relationship will include the normal sexual aspect of marriage as well. That’s not something strange. That’s not something that’s just a gift to each other. That’s a commitment that we make with the marriage, that we will be involved with that part of the marriage relationship in a very normal way. That’s perfectly expected.

[35:48]

Now, later on we will see that Paul says there may be a brief period of time when you agree between yourselves to separate for a short period, but that’s an unusual situation. We’ll see that in a few verses.

I would like to share here what, in one of the older commentaries, it says. It’s *Barnes Notes*, and it makes an interesting point here. It says:

Let them not imagine—

This is written probably a hundred and some years ago, 120, 130 years ago, so the language is a little stilted, but I think you’ll understand.

Let them not imagine that there is any virtue in being separate from each other, as if they were in a state of celibacy. They are bound to each other; in every way they are to evince kindness, and to seek to promote the happiness and purity of each other. There is a great deal of delicacy used here by Paul, and his expression is removed as far as possible from the grossness of pagan writers. His meaning is plain; but instead of using a word to express it which would be indelicate and offensive, he uses one which is not indelicate in the slightest degree. The word which he uses, *eunoian*, “benevolence” denotes kindness, goodwill, affection of mind. And by the use of the word “due,” he reminds them of the sacredness of their vow, and of the fact that in person, property, and in every respect, they belong to each other.

Now Paul goes on to explain that a little further in **verse 4**:

[1 Corinthians 7:4] *The wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does. And likewise the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does.*

Now that can sound a little bit confusing. How can both be in authority over both? Now again, keep the context here. We’re not saying the wife has authority to determine what the family is going to do financially or things along that line—we’re not dealing with that. We’re dealing with the intimacy of the personal sexual relationship within a marriage, and it talks about the body.

[37:56]

I like the way *Expositor's* translates that phrase about “not having authority.” It puts it this way:

The wife, or the husband as the case may be, does not have exclusive claim to his or her own body.

There's another individual who now has a claim too. Before you marry, they don't have a claim to your body. But when you make the commitment of marriage, they have a right too. You've made a commitment, and part of that commitment is to be available to them in this very intimate and special way.

Paul again declares—

This is a quote:

Paul again declares a supremely great principle. Marriage is a partnership. The husband cannot act independently of the wife, nor the wife of the husband. They must always act together.

It's a good way to put it, a partnership.

Another commentary says:

In wedlock, separate ownership of the person ceases. We give ourselves to our mate as well.

Now how can both have authority over each other? I think there's really an important lesson here about the way authority, godly authority, is properly utilized. Because of the marriage covenant, which each person accepts before God, each mate has a right to require the other to meet his or her sexual needs. That's a right. That's a part of the covenant; you agreed to it. “I have that right.” But that authority has to be exercised with tenderness, understanding, patience, consideration for one another. There must be mutual respect for each other's rights and needs.

The man or woman who demands sexual satisfaction from their mate, whenever he or she wants it, is within their rights, but they're abusing their authority, and they're harming their marriage. The man or woman who uses sexuality to manipulate their mate may be within their rights, but they're abusing their authority, and they're harming their marriage relationship. This could also reinforce the idea that none of us have the right to use our bodies in some way that negatively impacts our mate.

Paul says your body doesn't belong to you in this way, but to your mate. So, you can't use it however you want. You're there to serve one another in a very loving, a very special, a very pleasurable relationship in which we seek to be a wonderful partner for our mate and exclusively for our mate. If sexuality in marriage becomes selfish, then it begins to be a negative impact on that relationship instead of positive.

[41:05]

He goes on to say—we mentioned this a moment ago:

[1 Corinthians 7:5] *Do not deprive one another except with consent for a time, that you may give yourselves to fasting and prayer; and come together again so that Satan does not tempt you because of your lack of self-control.*

Now, I think it's interesting to note here, he says: “You may agree between yourselves, between husband and wife, that over a period of time you would choose not to be involved in a sexual

relationship, so that you may give yourself a little more focus on prayer and fasting.” Okay, so how long a time would that be? Well, how long can you fast? We’re not talking about a **long** period of time here of withdrawal from one another. We’re talking about a brief period of time.

Now, you might also note something else. It does not say: “You **must** withdraw from one another sexually during a period of fasting and prayer.” That’s a choice you can make. It’s not required of you. If you choose to make it, it’s all right. You can make that choice, but it is by consent. It’s not something that one person says: “I’m fasting and praying; leave me alone.” It’s a matter of: “You know, I’d really like to be able to focus on this a little bit more. How about if we just kind of put that on the back burner for a couple of days?” Okay, that should work fine. You have consented with one another.

And he goes on to make this clear in the next verse:

[1 Corinthians 7:6] *But I say this as a concession, not as a commandment.*

It’s something you can do if you choose to, but you’re not required. It’s up to you.

Now, we’re going to move to something else. He goes on to say—again, remember the subject is: Is it all right to remain single? Is it all right to be celibate through a single life?

[1 Corinthians 7:7] He says: *For I wish (verse 7) that all men were even as I myself. But each one has his own gift from God, one in this manner and another in that.*

Okay, so what is he telling us here? He’s saying that God gives gifts to us in this area of life as well. Some people have the gift of a good marriage, and they’re able to enjoy fully the pleasures of the sexuality of that relationship, the special bonding that that creates in that relationship, and that sexual part of their marriage is a gift from God.

But, there are others for whom God may give the gift of simply being able to be quite happy and content without that being a part of their lives. They’re able to go forward. They’re able to conduct themselves properly, purely, chastely as a good Christian, without having that as a part of their life. That’s a gift from God too.

And Paul is simply saying, “You know, I’m in a situation”—as far as we can tell, Paul didn’t have a wife to take with him and travel with him as some of the others did. So, Paul is basically, as far as we know, traveling by himself through life. He lives a number of years as a servant of Jesus Christ without the pleasure of having a mate with him. So, Paul says: “That’s a gift. God’s given me the ability to do that, and I’m grateful for that gift.” For others, God gives a different gift. So, Paul says: “All I really want is for all of us to be able use the gift God gives us properly.

[44:32]

Now, as a side point—and I don’t want to get bogged down in it, to take too much time here—but a number of the commentators speculate whether Paul was ever married at some point or another. And there are various reasons for suggesting that. I personally am not convinced by their arguments. But, is it a possibility? Yes, I would have to admit it is a possibility. Some have speculated that, you know, here is Paul, a Jewish man, a young Jewish man before he is converted, who is zealous about destroying this sect following the Nazarene and is attacking the Christians until Jesus Christ opens his eyes to see the truth. When that took place, there was a tremendous change in Paul’s life.

Now, most young men of Paul’s age, who were Jews, would’ve been married by that point in life. And therefore, some have speculated that when Paul became a Christian, that his Jewish wife rejected him

and divorced him. Is that a possibility? Well, again, we have no historical record that shows any such thing. Is it a possibility? Yes, I suppose it's a possibility, but it's **pure** speculation. There is nothing to show that. So, was he ever married at one point or not? It's hard to say. Paul evidently, from what we read, especially in **Ephesians chapter 5**, has a very high view of marriage and how it should be conducted, and, it certainly does sound like somebody who has a great deal of understanding. But then again, **Ephesians 5** was inspired by God. So, we don't want to give all the credit there to Paul. His knowledge of it may have been what God inspired him to have. So, we can't draw great conclusions there.

But, let's go on.

We're going to come to a series of sections here, brief sections that talk about the groups of individuals who make up the Church. Now I want to understand this, and without getting into a lot of history. Those who've been around for many years may remember that there was a significant change the Church made in its understanding about the marriage relationship and the durability of that relationship, the concept of divorce and remarriage that took place back in 1974. Up to that point we had a certain level of understanding, and our understanding grew at that point and changed our approach. So, let's examine what we see here.

First of all, we see the first group that Paul talks about in **verse 8**. He says:

[1 Corinthians 7:8] *But I say to the unmarried and to the widows: It is good for them if they remain even as I am;*

Okay, Paul is clearly single at this point, and he said it's good, it's perfectly acceptable, it's honorable, it's pleasing for them to remain single. Now there are a lot of reasons why that might be true. Later on, we will see in **1 Timothy chapter 5**—we won't be going there in this series—but in **1 Timothy 5** and **verse 14**, Paul urges the younger widows to go ahead and remarry. So, it's not a matter that Paul is saying somehow: "If you are a widow or widower, you should never remarry."

[47:52]

Literally, some of the commentaries claim that that's what Paul was saying. That's not it at all. It appears—and we'll see this later on in this chapter here, when we get up to about **verse 26** and so on—that apparently there was some kind of special difficulty going on in Corinth at this time, and so Paul is saying, for *the present distress*, for the time being, it might be better to remain single if you're single. So, that may be a part of what Paul is saying. But he is saying, "For those who are unmarried," (evidently those who have never married) "and those who are widows," (and by extension, we would say, widowers) "if they want to remain single, that's perfectly legitimate."

When my wife's grandmother became a part of the Church, she was a widow, and she had been widowed for a number of years at that point. And of course—you know how Church people are—many people were set on trying to play matchmaker. "Oh, I know this man; I know that man." And Grandma, who was a delightful person, would very kindly say: "I don't need some old man to take care of. I need somebody to take care of me!" And they would laugh and go on their way. But, the bottom line was, she said: "I was married. I was married for a number of years, and I really don't feel the need to remarry. I'm fine like I am." And she lived the rest of her life as a widow and was quite happy, quite successful. We fully expect to see her in God's Kingdom when Christ returns. It's a perfectly legitimate choice.

I've known of other people, I think of one particular gentleman I talked to a few years ago who, his wife

died, and he said: “All right, I’m going to be single the rest of my life and that’s all right. I’m good with that. But,” he said, “after a couple years, I got so lonely, and I said, ‘Why should I spend the rest of my life alone?’ ” And he found a very nice widow lady, and he married her, and they are happily married to this day. That’s a perfectly legitimate choice too.

[49:52]

So, Paul is simply saying: “If you’re not married, or if you’re a widow or widower, and you want to remain in that state—perfectly fine choice, not a problem. Don’t let anyone push you into it or make you somehow feel guilty because you’re not married.” No, we really don’t need matchmakers in the Church. We’ve seen that happen, and sometimes the results are pretty sad. So no, we don’t want to take that responsibility. If God provides a mate—wonderful! If not, you can be a good Christian as a single, as a widow, as a widower.

But, he goes on to say: **verse 9** It’s kind of an odd translation here, but we’ll see what it says.

[1 **Corinthians 7:9**] *but if they cannot exercise self-control, let them marry. For it is better to marry than to burn with passion.*

It almost sounds like Paul is saying: “Well, there are some people out there—good Christians—but you know, they’re just overwhelmed by their desires, and they just don’t have any self-control. So okay, go ahead and get married so that you don’t have to deal with that.” That’s not really the sense of what he’s saying. He’s saying that it is perfectly natural for people to desire the fullness of the marriage relationship—all that goes with it—not just the sexuality itself, but all the rest of it as well. That’s perfectly natural to desire such a thing. As I mentioned, the gentleman who said: “Why do I want to be alone the rest of my life? It’s lonely, and I can share life with someone.” That’s perfectly fine.

So, he’s saying: “If you are in that situation where you just really long to have that kind of relationship, sure, it’s fine. Go ahead and marry.” There is nothing wrong with remarriage after the death of a mate. It’s perfectly fine. Or for a single person—maybe it’s been a long time. You’re looking for that mate. Finally the right person comes along—that’s fine; that’s wonderful!

[51:46]

I think of a gentleman that I knew a number of years ago who was a bachelor up through the time he retired from work. And after that, he found this lovely widow lady, and the two of them are still married today, probably twenty, twenty-five years later. And I enjoyed doing their wedding years ago. That’s fine. We don’t know exactly when it’s going to be, but it’s perfectly fine. Don’t feel like there’s some superiority to remaining single and celibate. Being single and celibate is not superior to being married and enjoying the fullness of the marriage relationship.

So, he tells us: “That’s fine; go ahead and marry. It’s better to marry and not have this constant pull on you, that you have this strong desire and you have no way to meet those desires. Instead, if you can be married, then you don’t have to deal with that problem. You are able to share this very special intimacy in marriage, and, the desires are satisfied within that safe parameter that God established.”

Verse 10 We move to a second group.

He says: [1 **Corinthians 7:10**] *Now to the married—*

And we’re going to look at **verses 10** and **11**.

Now to the married I command, yet not I but the Lord:—

Okay, so what is he saying? He's telling us that: "Okay, you've asked for my guidance and direction on this. You sent me a question about it. And, that's fine, and I'm glad to talk to you about it. But remember, you already have instruction from Jesus Christ Himself about the marriage relationship and the sanctity of it."

You can tie in here—I won't go back and read it right now—but you can tie in here **Matthew 19 verses 3** through **12**. It's a very strong section where Jesus Christ talks about that what God has bound together, we keep together, that God intends that marriage relationship to last for a lifetime.

So, Paul says: [**1 Corinthians 7:10**] *Now to the married I command, yet not I but the Lord: A wife is not to depart from her husband. (She's not to be separated from him.)*

Now, this is a rule where both partners are Christians, okay? I want to emphasize that, that this is what he tells us, that within the marriage relationship where there are two converted people, the Spirit of God and the truth of God should enable us to work through the normal difficulties that every human being, every human relationship will have.

As we do premarital counseling for people who are preparing for marriage, we very often will talk about conflict and how to resolve conflicts, because **every** marriage will have conflicts. Every time two human beings get together, and especially in the closeness of marriage, there are going to be issues that have to be worked through, and conflicts will take place. Conflicts handled properly can be constructive and helpful. They can build that relationship. It's when they're handled badly that it begins to create problems. But they're going to happen, so, be prepared for that. Don't start thinking it's time to bail out every time a conflict comes along, or it's something that you don't—that things are not done the way you would like them to be.

[55:08]

But now, in saying this—and again, let's—well, let's go on to the next verse; then we'll tie this in.

[**1 Corinthians 7:11**] *But even if she does depart, let her remain unmarried or be reconciled to her husband. And a husband is not to divorce his wife.*

In other words, this goes both directions. "You are not to separate from," and that's the term that's used here, *depart from*. "You are not to be separated from." Now, this is the rule where both are Christians.

I do want to emphasize, and this is—it's not really what Paul addresses here, but it's something to keep in mind. There are situations where spousal abuse takes place. They're very sad situations. They're difficult to deal with, but, as we'll see as we go further here, God does not require anyone to stay in an abusive relationship. If one person is abusive, that's not Christianity. Christianity is not abusive of anyone. So, an abusive relationship is not one that God requires a person to stay in. Unfortunately, sometimes people feel like they're trapped in that kind of relationship, and they can't leave it. And, if you misunderstand what God's saying, you may begin to think that "God requires me to stay here even though I'm being abused." No, that's not true.

Now, we don't have time to go through the process of abuse, the cycle of abuse that takes place very commonly in some of these relationships, but it is an important matter. I do want to emphasize as we look through this chapter, I sometimes get a little worried about people reading through this chapter and what they're looking for, because sometimes people read through here looking for the loophole—looking

for the way out of a relationship they're not happy in. That's not what this chapter is about.

If you have some problems in your marriage, difficulties that you're having trouble dealing with, please, seek counsel. The first place I would send you is to your local pastor. Yes, are there situations where the pastor may not be able to fully help with the counseling? Yes, those situations can take place. If somebody were to come to me with a heavy alcohol addiction problem, an alcoholism problem, or a drug abuse problem, I probably would refer them—I'd be happy to help them at the level that I can—but I probably would refer them to a professional counselor because I'm not trained in those areas.

[57:38]

But, when it comes to the marriage relationship, the first place to consider is your pastor because the marriage relationship is created by God. It is a spiritual relationship, and therefore, the logical place to go is to the person whose specialty is the spiritual areas of life. In a sense, we could extend this from **chapter 6** where Paul says: "Do you go to the unjust to try to find justice?" Well, does it make sense to go to those who don't understand the spiritual aspects of marriage to try to solve the spiritual problems of marriage? Go to your pastor first. He's there, eager to help you.

Now, I hope that that's not why we're reading the chapter, but sometimes that's what happens. So, if an individual feels that they are in a situation where abuse is taking place, **please** seek counsel. Any professional will tell you that abuse doesn't get better on its own, and often it gets worse. Sometimes it can even produce death. So please, if you're in an abusive relationship, this isn't saying you have to stay there. Get counsel; get the help that you need.

But now, assuming that few of us are in that abusive relationship, do we sometimes encounter times of stress, times of difficulty getting along? Yes. It says here, *don't depart*, and then the next verse says, *but... if she does*.

Okay, what's it telling us? It's saying that you're best to stay together to work through the difficulties. Bailing out doesn't solve anything. Now, what does it tell you? We have what we call in conflict resolution, "a time-out." Sometimes emotions are so strong, our feelings are so powerful that we feel like: "I can't go on discussing it right now." So we ask for a time-out. We don't tell the other person, "You need a time-out." We say: "I'm sorry, I just need a time-out." That is not something that lasts until the next decade! That's something that lasts a brief period of time. Maybe an hour or two, maybe a day or two, but not much longer than that. We simply say: "I need to back up. I need to get my emotions under control, and then I need to come back, and we need to discuss this situation." A time-out doesn't end the discussion; it simply recesses it for a short period of time.

So, the sense here is—well, let's say the marriage relationship has gotten so tense, so difficult that the lady has trouble staying there, or the man has trouble staying there, because things are so tense and difficult. All right, they may separate for a short period of time—short period, okay? They may back away for a short period of time.

[1:00:42]

What options are there for them when they separate out in this way, when they back away from this for a moment? Well, it says there are two: the option of remaining *unmarried* and the option of being *reconciled*. The term here for *reconcile* is a strong term. It means: "to be **completely** reconciled, to change from one condition to another so as to remove all enmity and leave **no** impediment to unity and peace."

So, it's a matter of being fully reconciled, or, you remain single. Now again, this is a counseling situation, not something to decide on your own by yourself. But, the idea that: "Okay, I can't get along with this person, so therefore I'm going to leave them and go find someone else." Not an option! That's not an option for converted people, period. "Till death do you part; *what God has bound together, **let not man put asunder.***" These are specific and strong instructions, as Paul said, "from the Lord." These are not Church ideas. These are Jesus Christ's instructions.

So, those issues that addresses—we've looked at the unmarried, the widows and widowers. We've looked at the married. And that leads us to **verse 12**:

[1 Corinthians 7:12] *But to the rest—*

Wait a minute—who are *the rest*? We've talked about *unmarried*. We've talked about *married*. What other option is there? Well, you might be a part of *the rest*.

3 GROUPS – 3 ANSWERS

1. Unmarried and widows (verses 8-9)
2. Married (verses 10-11)
3. The rest (verses 12-16)

And that's something that we had to deeply come to understand in 1974. And, we're out of time again, so that's something we're going to have to address in class number 10.

We'll hope you'll join us for class 10. We again invite you to send in your questions for this particular class.

I will just give a caution there. General questions are welcome. To ask specific questions about your relationship—that doesn't belong to me; that belongs to your local pastor. So please take them there.

But if you have questions in a general sense you'd like to turn in, you have an hour after this class is posted, and we'll certainly try to address them in class number 10.

Thanks again for joining us.

[1:03:07]