



DESERT VIEW BIBLE CHURCH

FOLLOWING CHRIST THROUGH CHAOS •

PRINCIPLES OF MARRIAGE • 1 CORINTHIANS 7:1-16 • 6/26/2022

MAIN POINT

If we hope to honor God in our marriages, we must submit to His design for them. Marriage is not designed primarily for my happiness, but for holiness and eternal impact.

INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

What did you grow up dreaming about experiencing in marriage?

What are some specific ways—either positively or negatively—your family situation (parents, their marriage, etc.) has affected your view of marriage?

Are there any marriages you look up to or admire? What is it about those marriages that makes them admirable?

Why do you think marriage is important to God?

God established marriage not for our personal happiness but as a representation of His relationship with His followers, for our holiness and sanctification. The text we will look at in today's discussion challenges us to pursue individual holiness, regardless of our marital situation. Focusing on being a godly person is the key to a successful marriage and relationship, because holiness is more important than happiness.

UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

Aside from your family situation, what are the major influences in your life that have shaped your view of marriage? What has led you to marry or to remain single?

God knows the power of relationships. He designed marriage—the most intimate earthly relationship—as a way to motivate spouses to pursue Christ. But relationships also have the power to push us away from Him. The apostle Paul illustrated this point in 1 Corinthians 7.

READ 1 CORINTHIANS 7:1-11.

What was Paul's perspective on marriage and singleness?

What do you see as the main differences between a Christian view of marriage and a non-Christian view of marriage?

Why do you think God calls us to put our spouse's needs above our own? How does doing so change our own perspective?

What relational bad decisions does Paul allude to in 1 Corinthians 7:1-11? How do these types of decisions hinder a person's pursuit of holiness?

Some of those bad decisions that Paul drew attention to include withholding sex from a spouse (verse 5), sexual promiscuity (verses 8-9), and divorce (verse 11). Spouses have a mutual obligation to place their spouse's needs ahead of their own. By encouraging both the husband and the wife to fulfill their marital duties, Paul placed the emphasis on serving one's partner and placing his/her needs first, rather than relying on him/her to make you happy. Whether married or not, this type of sacrificial service should be the way we approach all our relationships, not just romantic ones. When we put others first, we are challenged to become more godly people who love others the way Christ loves us.

Focusing on the pursuit of holiness, rather than relational happiness, is the key to a successful marriage and relationship.

READ 1 CORINTHIANS 7:12-16.

All marriages face challenges, and those involving Christians with non-Christians have additional challenges; but working through the challenges and remaining faithful to Christ honors God and demonstrates the gospel.

In what ways is an unbelieving spouse "made holy" because of his or her marriage to a Christian?

What challenges does a Christian married to an unbeliever face when pursuing personal holiness?

APPLICATION

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

In your own words, how would you explain the main goal of a Christian marriage?

What happens in a marriage when our hearts are set on our own happiness rather than on honoring God and personal holiness?

In what areas of your marriage would you say you are more focused on your own happiness than you are on holiness? What needs to change?

What counsel would you give a Christian friend who is married to a non-Christian?

PRAYER

Lead your group in prayer, asking God to strengthen the marriages of our church based on the truths of His Word. Ask Him to continue to grow us in holiness. Pray that marriages would be marked by individuals who are meeting their spouse's needs and are focused on glorifying God.

COMMENTARY

7:1-4. This verse presents a Corinthian position, stated in correspondence previously sent to Paul, that recommended celibacy in marriage. What a divide in the Corinthian church! Some advocated marital celibacy while others were engaged in gross sexual immorality. Sexual desires, which can readily lead to sexual immorality, commend frequent sexual union between husband and wife. The phrase have the right in this context refers to sexual relations.

7:5. Paul issues an apostolic ruling: husbands and wives must not deprive one another sexually in marriage, except when mutually agreed upon for the sake of devotion to prayer. Like fasting from food and drink, periods of marital celibacy can hone one's focus on the one great desire: God Himself.

7:6-11. Paul expressed limited agreement to the view stated in verse 1, "It is good for a man not to have relations with a woman." He did think it was "good" if the Corinthians stayed single as he was—but only if they had the gift to do so. Paul gives another apostolic ruling: unmarried persons who lack self-control should get married. Paul reiterates the Lord's ruling to the married, giving an injunction to wives that they must remain in their marriage (see Matt. 19:1-9; Mark 10:1-12). The wife who has separated from her husband has two options: remain apart from him, though celibate, or be reconciled to her husband. Completing his reiteration of the Lord's instructions for marriage, Paul insisted that the husband is not to leave his wife.

7:12-13. The phrase to the rest is a reference to mixed marriages—a believer married to an unbeliever. Christians were only to marry "in the Lord" (v. 39). The situation Paul addresses here assumes that both spouses were unbelievers when they married but that one of them thereafter converted to Christianity. Since Jesus did not comment on this situation, Paul gave an apostolic ruling: the believing spouse must not leave the unbelieving spouse. One can easily conceive of the self-sacrifice entailed by this ethic. The passage also assumes that the unbeliever agrees that there are benefits to continuing the marital relationship (is willing to live with him or her).

7:14. A Christian spouse who remains faithful to his or her unbelieving spouse has a "sanctifying effect" on unbelieving family members. Paul is referring not just to the

possible future salvation of unbelievers in the household, but to their present protection from pagan values through the influence of the Christian member's exemplary morals.

7:15-16. Paul gives a qualification to the above ruling: Do not hinder a nonbeliever's desire to separate. Peace in this context refers to being "at peace" if the unbelieving spouse should decide to leave, for in this event the believer has done nothing wrong.