

# Maintaining Marriage

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## 1 Corinthians 7:8-16

Like every other area in our lives, we find it all too easy to botch up God's intended purpose. The Christians in Corinth had done this in several areas, but in this passage, Paul is addressing the subject of marriage. They were asking questions like: "Is marriage a command? Do you have to be married to please God? Should single people marry or is it better to stay single?? Can you be a more devoted Christian if you are not married? What about the case where a Christian is married to a non-Christian? Should they divorce?"

### The Context (verses 1-7)

In these verses Paul gives the regulative principle regarding marriage. These young Christians (many very immature in the faith) were struggling with the same difficulty we have today – sustaining marriage relationships. It is hard work! Right off the bat, Paul affirms that marriage is the norm, although not an absolute commandment for everybody. The context forms the general principle for what is to follow. Paul takes this general principle in verses 8-16 and applies it to four groups.

1. The First Group – Single People (verse 8) – Paul says that this can be “good.” The term “good” means beneficial. Paul was a single man. Before he was converted, he was a member of the Sanhedrin and would have been married to be part of that group. Some history indicates that Paul's wife died. Jesus was single. The way this can be good is if you know that you are gifted by God to control your physical desires and have a heart to channel your energies in to the service of God and others
2. The Second Group – (verses 10, 11) Christian Marriages. At the time in Corinth, the “super-spiritual” attitude going around was “Now that you are a Christian, you have to do away with the physical part of your relationship so you can devote yourself to serving Christ.” Christians were already getting a divorce because of it. They were missing a very important point, however. God hates divorce. Matthew 19:9 and Mark 10:11 and 12, as well as Matthew 5:32 as very clear. Can you imagine what it would be like if the Bible said “You can get a divorce if you want to dedicate yourself to serving God more fully?” Yet, every day, Christians divorce because they say “this is just not working,” or “I am not in love any more,” or “our differences are irreconcilable.”
  - a. Paul is not dealing here with the subject of adultery
3. Group three, those married to an unbeliever who wants to stay (12 – 14). Before two people get married, it is not best for a Christian to marry a non-Christian (39). Many times I have heard the argument: “My husband is not a Christian. Shouldn't I divorce him?” Look back at verse 14. “For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband.” How many people does it take to make a Christian home? One.

4. The final group is a Christian married to an unbeliever who wants to leave. Verse 15 tells you what to do. LET HIM GO.

What is the upshot of all this? Whatever God has given you as your marital state, accept it as His will and maximize it for His glory. Whatever your marital state, maintaining relationships is difficult duty. The tendency for all of us is to talk a good game when it comes to relationships but bail when it is time to put in the work necessary toward maintaining them. Other sections of I Corinthians speak to this task.

- Do not be divided on what sheet of music from which to sing (1 Corinthians 1:10)
- Do not fall into the trap of porn instead of physical intimacy as God intended (1 Corinthians 6:17-20)
- Facebook cannot take the place of cultivating a personal relationship (1 Corinthians 13)
- Are you amused by TV or amazed by the Gospel? (I Corinthians 15)
- Do you rely on self-help books or on the theme of God's book? (1 Corinthians 2:1-5)