

Day 1

 Please pray for holy guidance and insight before you begin today’s study.

Marriage

 The following passage from The Message version will hopefully provide additional context to the standard NIV-1984 version used in these StudySheets.

1 Corinthians 7:1-9 [The Message (MSG)]

¹ Now, getting down to the questions you asked in your letter to me. First, is it a good thing to have sexual relations?

²⁻⁶ Certainly — but only within a certain context. It’s good for a man to have a wife, and for a woman to have a husband. Sexual drives are strong, but marriage is strong enough to contain them and provide for a balanced and fulfilling sexual life in a world of sexual disorder. The marriage bed must be a place of mutuality — the husband seeking to satisfy his wife, the wife seeking to satisfy her husband. Marriage is not a place to “stand up for your rights.” Marriage is a decision to serve the other, whether in bed or out. Abstaining from sex is permissible for a period of time if you both agree to it, and if it’s for the purposes of prayer and fasting — but only for such times. Then come back together again. Satan has an ingenious way of tempting us when we least expect it. I’m not, understand, commanding these periods of abstinence — only providing my best counsel if you should choose them.

⁷ Sometimes I wish everyone were single like me — a simpler life in many ways! But celibacy is not for everyone any more than marriage is. God gives the gift of the single life to some, the gift of the married life to others.

⁸⁻⁹ I do, though, tell the unmarried and widows that singleness might well be the best thing for them, as it has been for me. But if they can’t manage their desires and emotions, they should by all means go ahead and get married. The difficulties of marriage are preferable by far to a sexually tortured life as a single.

^{1a} Now for the matters you wrote about:

Q1. What prompted Paul to write about “marriage”?

Q2. What kinds of temptations tormented the Corinthians?

 “Aphrodite had a festival of her own, the Aphrodisiac (also referred to as Aphrodisia), which was celebrated all over Greece but particularly in Athens and Corinth. In Corinth, intercourse with her priestesses was considered a method of worshipping Aphrodite.” [Source: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aphrodite>]

Q3. How might our society be similar to the Corinthian society?

^{1b} It is good for a man not to marry.

Q4. Since God instituted marriage from the time of Adam and Eve, why do you think Paul taught such a thing?

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

Q5. Did Paul contradict himself between verse ^{1b} and verse ²?

Q6. Why was Paul granting a “marriage” concession to the Corinthians?

Q7. Is “marriage” a bad thing in God’s eyes?

Matthew 19:4-6

⁴ "Haven't you read," [Jesus] replied, "that at the beginning the Creator 'made them male and female,' [Genesis 1:27] ⁵ and said, 'For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh' [Genesis 2:24]? ⁶ So they are no longer two, but one. Therefore, what God has joined together, let man not separate."

 “The Corinthian church was in turmoil because of the immorality of the culture around them. Some Greeks, in rejecting immorality, rejected sex and marriage altogether.” [Source: [Life Application Study Bible](#) – NIV, published by Tyndale and Zondervan, ©1984]

Day 2

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³The husband should fulfill his marital duty to his wife, and likewise the wife to her husband.

Q8. Paul counseled for something and against something; what is he for (the ‘pro’)? What is he against (the ‘con’ is implied: could it be selfishness or retribution)?

Pro:

Con:

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⁴The wife's body does not belong to her alone but also to her husband. In the same way, the husband's body does not belong to him alone but also to his wife.

Q9. How do I “belong” to my spouse? Is verse-4 focused exclusively on marital relations or – in general – on the marriage partnership between a husband and wife?

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Q10. Does a husband belong to his wife and is this concept taught in our society?

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Q11. Conversely, does a wife belong to her husband and is this concept taught in our society?

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Q12. As a believing man or woman, is there another person to whom you belong? Why?

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1 Corinthians 6:15

^{15a} Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ himself? ... ¹⁷ But he who unites himself with the Lord is one with him in spirit.

⁵Do not deprive each other except by mutual consent and for a time, so that you may devote yourselves to prayer. Then come together again so that Satan will not tempt you because of your lack of self-control. ⁶I say this as a concession, not as a command.

Q13. What does the word “mutual” as in “mutual consent” mean to you?

Q14. Would Paul argue that physical force or verbal manipulation (abuse) is justified to fulfill sexual desires of one spouse over the other?

Q15. Is Paul counseling spouses to not use sexual relations as a weapon or a punishment or a reward?

Q16. What is an acceptable reason in Paul’s view to be abstinent for a time?

Q17. How would Satan tempt the Corinthians? How does Satan tempt us?

Day 3

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^{7a} I wish that all men were as I am. ^{7b} But each man has his own gift from God; one has this gift, another has that.

Q18. What does Paul mean when he wrote, "I wish that all men were as I am"?

1st Corinthians 7:7 [King James Version (KJV)]

For I would that all men were even as I myself. But every man hath his proper gift of God, one after this manner, and another after that.

 Commentary by Albert Barnes: " 'But every man hath his proper gift' [KJV] - Every man has his own special talent, or excellence. One man excels in one thing, and another in another. One may not have this particular virtue, but he may be distinguished for another virtue quite as valuable. The doctrine here is, therefore, that we are not to judge of others by ourselves, or measure their virtue by ours. We may excel in some one thing, they in another. And because they have not our special virtue, or capability, we are not to condemn or denounce them; compare Matthew 19:11, Matthew 19:12." [Public Domain; Notes on the Bible by Albert Barnes (1834); <https://www.sacred-texts.com/bib/cmt/barnes/co1007.htm>]

 Commentary continued: " 'Of God' [KJV] - Bestowed by God either in the original endowments and faculties of body or mind, or by his grace. In either case it is the gift of God. The virtue of continence [self-restraint, especially with regard to sex] is his gift as well as any other; and Paul had reason, as any other man must have, to be thankful that God had conferred it on him. . . Paul's virtue in this was strengthened by his resolution; by his manner of life; by his frequent fastings and trials, and "by the abundant employment" which God gave him in the apostleship. And it is true still, that if a man is desirous to overcome the lusts of the flesh – industry, and hardship, and trial, and self-denial will enable him, by the grace of God, to do it. Idleness is the cause of no small part of the corrupt desires of people; and God kept Paul from these: (1) By giving him enough to do; and, (2) By giving him enough to suffer. [Public Domain; Notes on the Bible by Albert Barnes (1834); <https://www.sacred-texts.com/bib/cmt/barnes/co1007.htm>]

Q19. Why did God give Paul the "gift" of bachelorhood?

Matthew 19:10-12

¹⁰ The disciples said to him, "If this is the situation between a husband and wife, it is better not to marry."

¹¹ Jesus replied, "Not everyone can accept this word, but only those to whom it has been given.

¹² For some are eunuchs because they were born that way; others were made that way by men; and others have renounced marriage because of the kingdom of heaven. The one who can accept this should accept it."

⁸Now to the unmarried and the widows I say: It is good for them to stay unmarried, as I am. ⁹But if they cannot control themselves, they should marry, for it is better to marry than to burn with passion.

Q20. Is marriage a bad thing?

 "... Many new Believers in Corinth thought that sex was wrong, and so engaged couples were deciding not to get married. In this passage, Paul was telling couples who wanted to marry that they should not frustrate their normal sexual desires by avoiding marriage. This does not mean, however, that people who have trouble controlling themselves should marry the first person who comes along. It is better to deal with the pressure of desire than to deal with an unhappy marriage. [Source: Life Application Study Bible – NIV, published by Tyndale and Zondervan, ©1984, page 2,071.]

¹⁰To the married I give this command (not I, but the Lord): A wife must not separate from her husband. ¹¹But if she does, she must remain unmarried or else be reconciled to her husband. And a husband must not divorce his wife.

Q21. Are these concepts (verses 10&11) embraced by our society? By the Christian community?

Society:

Christians:

Q22. In 1 Corinthians 6, Paul taught about lawsuits between Believers; how is a divorce today obtained?

1 Corinthians 6:1, 5-7

¹ If any of you has a dispute with another, dare he take it before the ungodly for judgment instead of before the saints? ... ⁵ I say this to shame you. Is it possible that there is nobody among you wise enough to judge a dispute between believers? ⁶ But instead, one brother goes to law against another — and this in front of unbelievers! ⁷ The very fact that you have lawsuits among you means you have been completely defeated already. Why not rather be wronged? Why not rather be cheated?

 Additional Biblical teachings regarding divorce:

Malachi 2:16

"I hate divorce," says the LORD God of Israel...

Matthew 5:32

"But I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for marital unfaithfulness, causes her to become an adulteress, and anyone who marries the divorced woman commits adultery."

Matthew 19:7-9

⁷ "Why then," they [Jewish religious leaders, the Pharisees] asked, "did Moses command that a man give his wife a certificate of divorce and send her away?"

⁸ Jesus replied, "Moses permitted you to divorce your wives because your hearts were hard. But it was not this way from the beginning. ⁹ I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for marital unfaithfulness, and marries another woman commits adultery."

Q23. As a practical question, is the Lord teaching that a married couple must never divorce?

Q24. If a married person suffers from physical or verbal abuse by her or his spouse, may a Believer divorce the abusive spouse?

Q25. If a Believer is divorced, may the Believer remarry?

Day 4

 Please pray for holy guidance and insight before you begin today’s study.

¹² To the rest I say this (I, not the Lord): If any brother has a wife who is not a believer and she is willing to live with him, he must not divorce her. ¹³ And if a woman has a husband who is not a believer and he is willing to live with her, she must not divorce him.

Q26. In verse 12, is Paul stating his opinion and, if yes, are we to adhere to his teachings in this section?

 Since our Lord Jesus was ministering primarily to the Jewish population, preaching His Word, sharing His gift of salvation, and reaping the first Believers, He had no reason to teach about divorce between Believers and non-believers. Jesus was starting a movement that focused on Him, and through Him – the Father. Jesus’ Words were ‘Love God!’ and ‘Love your neighbor!’ Jesus emphasized the positive, He emphasized agapé love. Then, when Paul taught the Lord’s Words, he used strong authoritative language such as the word ‘command’ (see verse 10, above). In verse 12, however, Paul reduced the authority of his language (“I say this”) because the source of the words was his as inspired by the Holy Spirit.

Q27. Why does Paul state that we should not divorce our unbelieving spouse?

Q28. Why do you think Paul qualified his statement with the phrase “if... she [or he] is willing to live with him [or her]”?

 It seemed that in the Corinthian church, new Believers were divorcing their non-believing spouses to marry Believers. Paul wanted the practice to stop because the behavior contradicted God’s view of marriage.

Mark 10:2-12

² Some Pharisees came and tested him by asking, "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife?"

³ "What did Moses command you?" he replied.

⁴ They said, "Moses permitted a man to write a certificate of divorce and send her away."

⁵ "It was because your hearts were hard that Moses wrote you this law," Jesus replied. ⁶ "But at the beginning of creation God 'made them male and female.' ⁷ 'For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, ⁸ and the two will become one flesh.' [Genesis 2:24] So they are no longer two, but one. ⁹ Therefore what God has joined together, let man not separate."

¹⁰ When they were in the house again, the disciples asked Jesus about this. ¹¹ He answered, "Anyone who divorces his wife and marries another woman commits adultery against her. ¹² And if she divorces her husband and marries another man, she commits adultery."

Day 5

 Please pray for holy guidance and insight before you begin today's study.

¹⁴ For the unbelieving husband has been sanctified through his wife, and the unbelieving wife has been sanctified through her believing husband. Otherwise, your children would be unclean, but as it is, they are holy.

Q29. Is Paul stating a promise that blessings flow from the Believer to the unbeliever in a marriage union?

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-  'Sanctify': [definition 1 of 5] "to make holy; set apart as sacred; consecrate" [<https://www.dictionary.com/browse/sanctify>].
-  When we use the phrase "Holy Matrimony," we acknowledge the union between a believing husband and a believing wife as a wonderful, marvelous, intimate gift from God. Through the belief of both partners and their unified thanksgiving and worship of the Lord, the marriage is holy and children born through this marriage are "set apart from others [non-believers] by a sort of exclusive privilege, so as to be reckoned holy in the Church" [quotation from ©John Calvin's Commentary on the Bible, <https://bibleportal.com/verse-topic?v=1+Corinthians+7%3A14&version=NIV>].
-  The Apostle Paul also teaches that the belief of one partner is enough to sanctify her or his spouse and children. This sanctification is undoubtedly broken when the unbelieving spouse or an older-aged child outright rejects the Lord and His saving grace.
-  Additionally, when Paul wrote this Letter, he was teaching against the evil idolatry of the Corinthian culture (see lesson 1, page 1). In Adam Clarke's Commentary on the Bible [<https://bibleportal.com/verse-topic?v=1+Corinthians+7%3A14&version=NIV>], Mr. Clarke explained, "If we consider the apostle as speaking of the children of heathens, we shall get a remarkable comment on this passage from Tertullian, who, in his treatise De Carne Christi, chaps. 37, 39, gives us a melancholy account of the height to which superstition and idolatry had arrived in his time among the Romans. 'A child,' says he, 'from its very conception, was dedicated to the idols and demons they worshipped. While pregnant, the mother had her body swathed round with bandages, prepared with idolatrous rites. The embryo they conceived to be under the inspection of the goddess Alemona, who nourished it in the womb. Nona and Decima took care that it should be born in the ninth or tenth month. Partula adjusted everything relative to the labor; and Lucina ushered it into the light. During the week preceding the birth a table was spread for Juno; and on the last day certain persons were called together to mark the moment on which the Parcae, or Fates, had fixed its destiny. The first step the child set on the earth was consecrated to the goddess Statina; and, finally, some of the hair was cut off, or the whole head shaven, and the hair offered to some god or goddess through some public or private motive of devotion.' He adds that 'no child among the heathens was born in a state of purity; and it is not to be wondered at,' says he, 'that demons possess them from their youth, seeing they were thus early dedicated to their service.' In reference to this, he thinks, St. Paul speaks in the verse before us: The unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife - else were your children unclean; but now are they holy; i.e., 'As the parents were converted to the Christian faith, the child comes into the world without these impure and unhallowed rites; and is from its infancy consecrated to the true God.' "
-  While Tertullian wrote about his Roman experiences in Carthage, we can infer that many of the idol-worship practices in Carthage were also practiced in Corinth.

Q30. Are there any New Testament examples that you can think of where a head of household came to believe in the Gospel of Jesus Christ and subsequently their household came to believe through him or her?

John 4:46-47, 49-53

⁴⁶ Once more he [Jesus] visited Cana in Galilee, where he had turned the water into wine. And there was a certain royal official whose son lay sick at Capernaum. ⁴⁷ When this man heard that Jesus had arrived in Galilee from Judea, he went to him and begged him to come and heal his son, who was close to death...

⁴⁹ The royal official said, "Sir, come down before my child dies."

⁵⁰ Jesus replied, "You may go. Your son will live." The man took Jesus at his word and departed.

⁵¹ While he was still on the way, his servants met him with the news that his boy was living. ⁵² When he inquired as to the time when his son got better, they said to him, "The fever left him yesterday at the seventh hour."

⁵³ Then the father realized that this was the exact time at which Jesus had said to him, "Your son will live." So he and all his household believed.

Acts 16:13-15

¹³ [In Philippi] On the Sabbath we [Paul, Luke, Silas, and others] went outside the city gate to the river, where we expected to find a place of prayer. We sat down and began to speak to the women who had gathered there. ¹⁴ One of those listening was a woman named Lydia, a dealer in purple cloth from the city of Thyatira, who was a worshiper of God. The Lord opened her heart to respond to Paul's message. ¹⁵ When she and the members of her household were baptized, she invited us to her home. "If you consider me a believer in the Lord," she said, "come and stay at my house." And she persuaded us.

Acts 16:22-34

²² The crowd joined in the attack against Paul and Silas, and the magistrates ordered them to be stripped and beaten. ²³ After they had been severely flogged, they were thrown into prison, and the jailer was commanded to guard them carefully. ²⁴ Upon receiving such orders, he put them in the inner cell and fastened their feet in the stocks.

²⁵ About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the other prisoners were listening to them. ²⁶ Suddenly there was such a violent earthquake that the foundations of the prison were shaken. At once all the prison doors flew open, and everybody's chains came loose. ²⁷ The jailer woke up, and when he saw the prison doors open, he drew his sword and was about to kill himself because he thought the prisoners had escaped. ²⁸ But Paul shouted, "Don't harm yourself! We are all here!"

²⁹ The jailer called for lights, rushed in, and fell trembling before Paul and Silas. ³⁰ He then brought them out and asked, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?"

³¹ They replied, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved — you and your household."

³² Then they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all the others in his house. ³³ At that hour of the night the jailer took them and washed their wounds; then immediately he and all his family were baptized. ³⁴ The jailer brought them into his house and set a meal before them; he was filled with joy because he had come to believe in God — he and his whole family.

Day 6

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¹⁵ But if the unbeliever leaves, let him do so. A believing man or woman is not bound in such circumstances; God has called us to live in peace.

Q31. Is this verse a “loophole” to rid ourselves of a “difficult” spouse?

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Q32. If a non-believing spouse demands that the believing spouse renounce his or her belief in Jesus, is the Believer to do so to save the marriage?

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Q33. Are we to stay married to our partner, regardless of the danger we or our children may be in because of physical or emotional abuse that our spouse may inflict upon us?

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Q34. If a Believer divorces due to the spouse’s unbelief, does God want the Believer to remain celibate or to remarry? Why?

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¹⁶ How do you know, wife, whether you will save your husband? Or, how do you know, husband, whether you will save your wife?

Q35. How would you explain verse 16?

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