SMITH FOR CHRIST PUBLISHING · BEREAN DASHBOARD STUDY

1 Corinthians 7

Married, Single, and Called — O·I·A, integrated with the Deep Dive

OBSERVATION · INTERPRETATION · APPLICATION · 2026-11-15 · NASB 1995

"Seeking God diligently — examining the Scriptures daily to see whether these things were so." — Acts 17:11

CHAPTER THEME

Married or single, bound or free, God's call meets me exactly where I am. Marriage is a holy gift given in both directions, singleness is a gift with its own freedom, and either one is lived with an undivided heart toward a Lord whose world is passing away.

00 The Text

1 CORINTHIANS 7 (NASB95), MARKED

HOW THIS STUDY IS MARKED — God — His character & actions · Command / instruction · Key repeated word · Sin / warning · Promise / blessing · Time / place / contrast

1 Now concerning the things about which you wrote, it is good for a man not to touch a woman.

2 But because of immoralities, each man is to have his own wife, and each woman is to have her own husband.

3 The husband must fulfill his duty to his wife, and likewise also the wife to her husband.

4 The wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does; and likewise also the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does.

5 Stop depriving one another, except by agreement for a time, so that you may devote yourselves to prayer, and come together again so that Satan will not tempt you because of your lack of self-control.

6 But this I say by way of concession, not of command.

7 Yet I wish that all men were even as I myself am. However, each man has his own gift from God, one in this manner, and another in that.

8 But I say to the unmarried and to widows that it is good for them if they remain even as I.

9 But if they do not have self-control, let them marry; for it is better to marry than to burn with passion.

10 But to the married I give instructions, not I, but the Lord, that the wife should not leave her husband

11 (but if she does leave, she must remain unmarried, or else be reconciled to her husband), and that the husband should not divorce his wife.

12 But to the rest I say, not the Lord, that if any brother has a wife who is an unbeliever, and she consents to live with him, he must not divorce her.

13 And a woman who has an unbelieving husband, and he consents to live with her, she must not send her husband away.

14 For the unbelieving husband is sanctified through his wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified through her believing husband; for otherwise your children are unclean, but now they are holy.

15 Yet if the unbelieving one leaves, let him leave; the brother or the sister is not under bondage in such cases, but God has called us to peace.

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

17 Only, as the Lord has assigned to each one, as God has called each, in this manner let him walk. And so I direct in all the churches.

18 Was any man called when he was already circumcised? He is not to become uncircumcised. Has anyone been called in uncircumcision? He is not to be circumcised.

19 Circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing, but what matters is the keeping of the commandments of God.

20 Each man must remain in that condition in which he was called.

21 Were you called while a slave? Do not worry about it; but if you are able also to become free, rather do that.

22 For he who was called in the Lord while a slave, is the Lord's freedman; likewise he who was called while free, is Christ's slave.

23 You were bought with a price; do not become slaves of men.

24 Brethren, each one is to remain with God in that condition in which he was called.

25 Now concerning virgins I have no command of the Lord, but I give an opinion as one who by the mercy of the Lord is trustworthy.

26 I think then that this is good in view of the present distress, that it is good for a man to remain as he is.

27 Are you bound to a wife? Do not seek to be released. Are you released from a wife? Do not seek a wife.

28 But if you marry, you have not sinned; and if a virgin marries, she has not sinned. Yet such will have trouble in this life, and I am trying to spare you.

29 But this I say, brethren, the time has been shortened, so that from now on those who have wives should be as though they had none;

30 and those who weep, as though they did not weep; and those who rejoice, as though they did not rejoice; and those who buy, as though they did not possess;

31 and those who use the world, as though they did not make full use of it; for the form of this world is passing away.

32 But I want you to be free from concern. One who is unmarried is concerned about the things of the Lord, how he may please the Lord;

33 but one who is married is concerned about the things of the world, how he may please his wife,

34 and his interests are divided. The woman who is unmarried, and the virgin, is concerned about the things of the Lord, that she may be holy both in body and spirit; but one who is married is concerned about the things of the world, how she may please her husband.

35 This I say for your own benefit; not to put a restraint upon you, but to promote what is appropriate and to secure undistracted devotion to the Lord.

36 But if any man thinks that he is acting unbecomingly toward his virgin daughter, if she is past her youth, and if it must be so, let him do what he wishes, he does not sin; let her marry.

37 But he who stands firm in his heart, being under no constraint, but has authority over his own will, and has decided this in his own heart, to keep his own virgin daughter, he will do well.

38 So then both he who gives his own virgin daughter in marriage does well, and he who does not give her in marriage will do better.

39 A wife is bound as long as her husband lives; but if her husband is dead, she is free to be married to whom she wishes, only in the Lord.

40 But in my opinion she is happier if she remains as she is; and I think that I also have the Spirit of God.

Marked in the text

- **v2** "because of immoralities" — Sin / warning
- **v3** "fulfill his duty" — Command / instruction
- **v4** "does not have authority over his own body" — Time / place / contrast
- **v5** "Stop depriving one another" — Command / instruction

- **v5** “so that Satan will not tempt you” — Sin / warning
- **v6** “by way of concession, not of command” — Time / place / contrast
- **v7** “each man has his own gift from God” — Promise / blessing
- **v9** “it is better to marry than to burn with passion” — Time / place / contrast
- **v9** “it is better to marry than to burn” — Time / place / contrast
- **v10** “not I, but the Lord” — God — His character & actions
- **v11** “be reconciled to her husband” — Promise / blessing
- **v14** “now they are holy” — Promise / blessing
- **v15** “not under bondage” — Time / place / contrast
- **v15** “God has called us to peace” — God — His character & actions
- **v17** “in this manner let him walk” — Command / instruction
- **v19** “the keeping of the commandments of God” — Command / instruction
- **v22** “the Lord’s freedman” — Promise / blessing
- **v23** “You were bought with a price” — God — His character & actions
- **v23** “do not become slaves of men” — Sin / warning
- **v24** “remain with God” — Command / instruction
- **v26** “the present distress” — Time / place / contrast
- **v28** “you have not sinned” — Promise / blessing
- **v29** “the time has been shortened” — Time / place / contrast
- **v31** “the form of this world is passing away” — Time / place / contrast
- **v32** “free from concern” — Promise / blessing
- **v35** “undistracted devotion to the Lord” — Promise / blessing
- **v39** “only in the Lord” — Command / instruction
- **v40** “I also have the Spirit of God” — God — His character & actions
- **v15** “called” — Key repeated word (every occurrence)
- **v8** “remain” — Key repeated word (every occurrence)
- **v40** “remains” — Key repeated word (every occurrence)

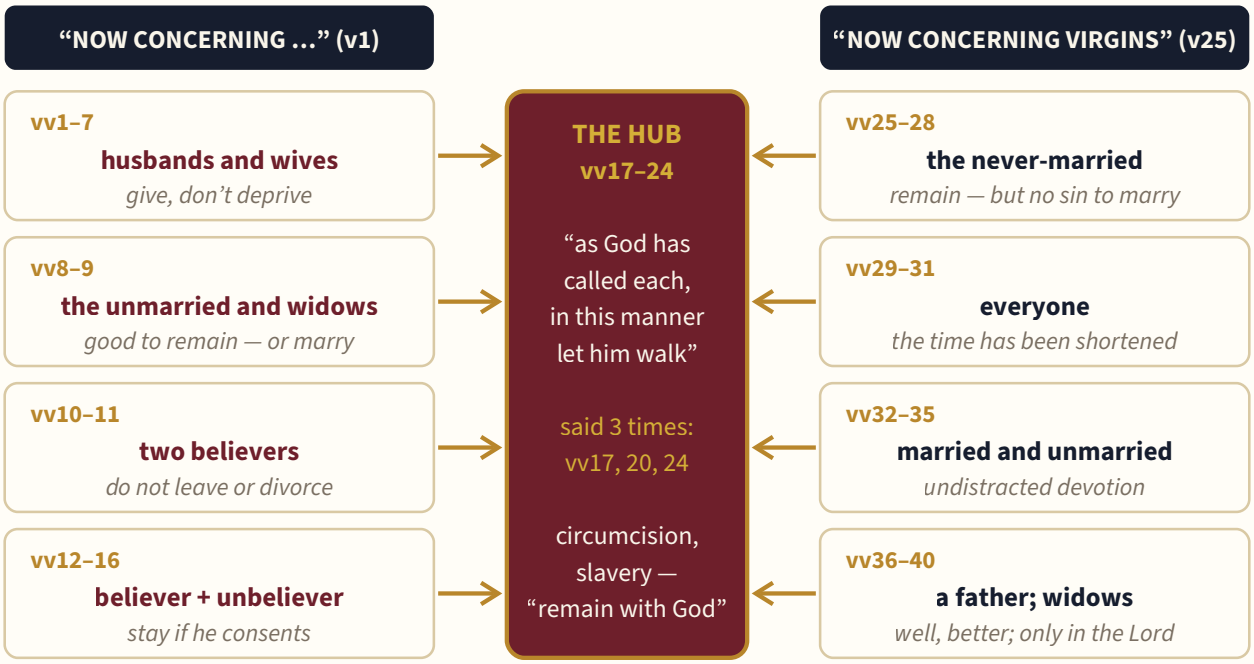
01 Observation

WHAT DOES THE TEXT SAY?

KEY VERSE · 1 CORINTHIANS 7:7

"Yet I wish that all men were even as I myself am. However, ☆each man has his own gift from God, one in this manner, and another in that."

FIGURE · THE WHEEL OF CHAPTER 7



Paul answers each group the Corinthians asked about, and every answer turns on the hub he states three times in verses 17–24: walk with God where He called you.

Setting. Paul writes from Ephesus (16:8) to the church in Corinth, a port city famous for sexual license. Chapters 1–6 answered reports he had heard; chapter 7 opens their own letter: "Now concerning the things about which you wrote" (v1). The same "now concerning" marks each new question (7:25; 8:1; 12:1; 16:1, 12). Chapter 6 ended with "Flee immorality" and "you have been bought with a price"; chapter 7 turns from the brothel to the marriage bed.

Who: Paul — sometimes reporting "the Lord" (v10), sometimes giving his own apostolic word (vv12, 25, 40); husbands and wives; the unmarried and widows (v8); believers married to unbelievers (vv12–16) and their children (v14); the circumcised and uncircumcised (vv18–19); slaves and the free (vv21–23); virgins (vv25, 28, 34, 36–38); widows (vv39–40).

Structure:

- vv1–9 — **marriage is not less holy:** the Corinthians' claim, "it is good for a man not to touch a woman"; Paul's "But because of immoralities …" (v2). Mutual duty (vv3–4); stop depriving one another except by agreement, for a time, for prayer (v5); "this I say by way of concession" (v6); each has his own gift from God (v7); to the unmarried and widows — remain, or marry rather than burn (vv8–9).
- vv10–16 — **divorce:** to two believers, the Lord's command — do not leave; if separated, remain unmarried or be reconciled (vv10–11). To a believer with an unbelieving spouse — do not divorce if the spouse consents (vv12–13); the spouse is sanctified, the children holy (v14); if the unbeliever leaves, let him leave — not under bondage; God has called us to peace (v15); how do you know whether you will save your spouse? (v16).
- vv17–24 — **the principle:** walk as God called you (v17), illustrated by circumcision (vv18–19) and slavery (vv21–23), and said three times (vv17, 20, 24). "You were bought with a price; do not become slaves of men" (v23).
- vv25–31 — **the present distress:** no command of the Lord, but an opinion (v25); remain as you are (vv26–27); marrying is not sin, but brings trouble (v28); the time has been shortened — five "as though" clauses (vv29–31); the form of this world is passing away (v31).
- vv32–40 — **undistracted devotion:** free from concern (v32); the married rightly divided (vv33–34); not a restraint, but devotion (v35); a man and his virgin daughter — well and better (vv36–38); a widow free to marry, only in the Lord; happier as she is; "I also have the Spirit of God" (vv39–40).

Repeated words, with counts (NASB95):

- "wife / wives" ×18 — vv2, 3 (×2), 4 (×2), 10, 11, 12, 14 (×2), 16 (×2), 27 (×3), 29, 33, 39.
- "husband" ×17 — vv2, 3 (×2), 4 (×2), 10, 11 (×2), 13 (×2), 14 (×2), 16 (×2), 34, 39 (×2).
- "Lord" ×12 (incl. "Lord's," v22) — vv10, 12, 17, 22 (×2), 25 (×2), 32 (×2), 34, 35, 39.
- "marry / married / marries / marriage" ×11 — vv9 (×2), 10, 28 (×2), 33, 34, 36, 38 (×2), 39; plus "unmarried" ×4 — vv8, 11, 32, 34.
- "called" ×9 — vv15, 17, 18 (×2), 20, 21, 22 (×2), 24.
- "remain(s)" ×6 — vv8, 11, 20, 24, 26, 40.
- "God" ×6 — vv7, 15, 17, 19, 24, 40.
- "virgin(s)" ×6 — vv25, 28, 34, 36, 37, 38.
- "each" ×6 — vv2 (×2), 7, 17 (×2), 24.
- "concerned / concern" ×5 — vv32 (×2), 33, 34 (×2).
- "unbeliever / unbelieving" ×5 — vv12, 13, 14 (×2), 15.
- "circumcised / uncircumcised / (un)circumcision" ×5 — vv18 (×4), 19.
- "as though" ×5 — vv29, 30 (×3), 31.
- "good" ×4 — vv1, 8, 26 (×2); "well / better" ×4 — vv9, 37, 38 (×2).
- "slave(s)" ×4 — vv21, 22 (×2), 23; "free / freedman" ×4 — vv21, 22 (×2), 39.
- "leave(s)" ×4 — vv10, 11, 15 (×2); "divorce" ×2 — vv11, 12.
- "world" ×4 — vv31 (×2), 33, 34; "please" ×3 — vv32, 33, 34.
- "sinned / sin" ×3 — vv28 (×2), 36; "likewise" ×3 — vv3, 4, 22.

Symmetry — count the "likewise." Husband ⟷ wife in almost every line of vv2–4, again in vv10–16 and vv32–34. In a world where a wife was property, Paul writes duties in both directions.

Paul's labels for his authority — watch them: "by way of concession, not of command" (v6); "not I, but the Lord" (v10); "I say, not the Lord" (v12); "I have no command of the Lord, but I give an opinion" (v25); "I think that I also have the Spirit of God" (v40).

Contrasts: married ⟷ unmarried; believer ⟷ unbeliever; unclean ⟷ holy (v14); slave ⟷ freedman (v22); bound ⟷ released (v27); the things of the Lord ⟷ the things of the world (vv32–34); does well ⟷ does better (v38).

Shape of the chapter: a wheel — questions answered on every side (vv1–16, 25–40), and one hub in the middle (vv17–24): walk with God where He called you.

Chapter theme (my words): Married or single, bound or free, God's call meets me where I am. Marriage is a holy gift to be given in both directions, singleness is a gift with its own freedom, and either one is lived with an undivided heart toward a Lord whose world is passing away.

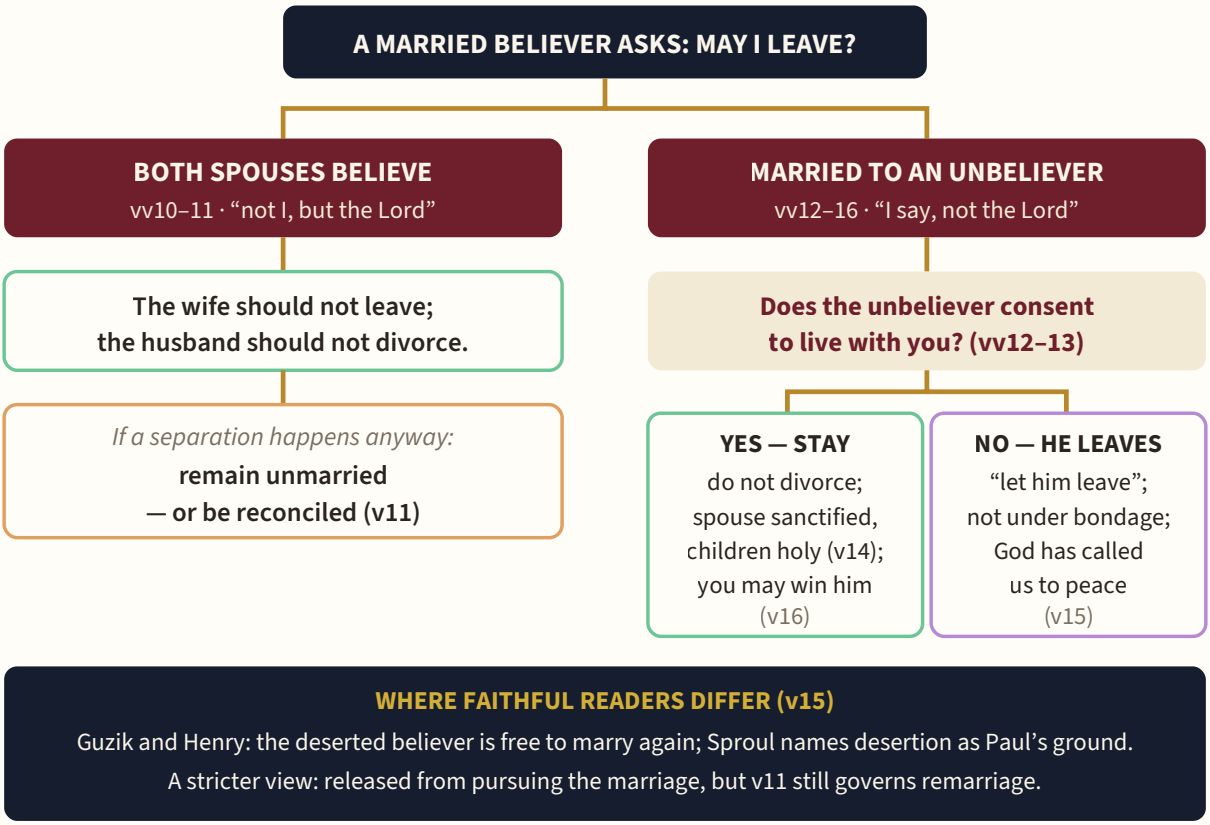
02 Interpretation

WHAT DOES THE TEXT MEAN?

KEY VERSE · 1 CORINTHIANS 7:15

"Yet if the unbelieving one leaves, let him leave; the brother or the sister is ◷ not under bondage in such cases, but △ God has called us to peace."

FIGURE · MAY A BELIEVER LEAVE? (VV10–16)



Follow the branches: two believers stay or reconcile; a believer married to an unbeliever stays if the spouse consents — and is not bound if the unbeliever leaves.

FIGURE · HOW PAUL LABELS HIS WORDS

VERSE	WHAT PAUL SAYS	WHAT KIND OF WORD IT IS
v6	*"by way of concession, not of command"*	a permission (the pause for prayer), not a requirement
v10	*"not I, but the Lord"*	Jesus' own teaching on divorce (Mark 10; Matthew 19)
v12	*"I say, not the Lord"*	an apostle's word where Jesus left no recorded saying
v25	*"I have no command of the Lord, but I give an opinion"*	counsel from one made trustworthy by mercy
v40	*"I think that I also have the Spirit of God"*	Spirit-given judgment — a quiet claim to inspiration

Guzik and Henry: all five are inspired — they differ in kind (command, counsel, concession), not in authority.

Read down the middle column: Paul tells the reader exactly what kind of word he is giving at each step, from the Lord's command to an apostle's Spirit-led counsel.

Is verse 1 Paul's view or the Corinthians'? Guzik reads "it is good for a man not to touch a woman" as their slogan — "This was probably a statement made by the Corinthian Christians, which they asked Paul to agree with" — which Paul accepts only with the big "But" of verse 2. Henry reads it as Paul's own counsel, limited to "that juncture of time at least," and warns against the ancients who ran into "an extreme … in favour of celibacy and virginity." Either way, verses 2–5 overturn the idea that abstaining inside marriage is holier. "Touch" is a polite way of speaking of sexual relations.

Marriage is mutual (vv2–6). The duty (*opheilē*) is a debt, and the husband's is written first. Neither spouse has sole authority over his own body. "Deprive" (v5) is the verb of "defraud" in 6:8; Guzik includes withheld affection and romance, not only frequency — and insists that mutual duty never licenses coercion or abuse. The only pause has three fences: by agreement, for a time, for prayer. "By way of concession" (v6) most likely refers to that pause, not to marriage itself.

Both are gifts (vv7–9). Paul wishes all could be as he is, but "each man has his own gift from God" — *charisma*, the word of chapter 12. Neither state is first or second class. On "burn" (v9), Guzik follows Calvin: "It is one thing to burn, another to feel heat." Henry: "This is God's remedy for lust." Sproul, preaching Mark 10, calls Christians who cohabit outside marriage guilty of "a gross and heinous sin against God."

Divorce between believers (vv10–11). Paul repeats Jesus ("not I, but the Lord"; Mark 10:9; Matt 19:9). If a separation happens, two doors only: remain unmarried or be reconciled. Guzik: "They may live as separate, but not single." Sproul: "Marriage was intended to be forever," and God's condescension to sin "does not go so far as no-fault divorce or divorce on the grounds of incompatibility."

A believer married to an unbeliever (vv12–16). "I say, not the Lord" is not a lower inspiration; Jesus left no saying on this case (Guzik: "Jesus' inspired apostle will!"). The believer must not initiate divorce. Henry explains why the question arose: Ezra 10 had required Israel to put away idolatrous wives.

- **"Sanctified" (v14)** does not mean saved — verse 16 still asks whether the spouse will be saved. The marriage is not defiling. On "now they are holy," Henry reads covenant standing ("a holy, not a common and unclean seed"); Guzik, God's special mercy until the age of accountability. Paedobaptists use the verse for infant baptism (Ligonier indexes Sproul's infant-baptism lectures under this chapter); Baptists read the same holiness without baptism.
- **"Not under bondage" (v15) — where Christians differ.** Guzik: the deserted believer is "free to remarry." Henry: "the deserted person must be free to marry again," otherwise "marriage would be a state of servitude indeed." Sproul names "the desertion of the unbeliever" as Paul's added ground for divorce. A stricter evangelical view holds that the believer is released from pursuing the marriage but that v11 still governs remarriage. All agree the believer must not seek the separation, and "God has called us to peace."
- **v16** can be read as hope (stay — you may win your spouse; Henry: "Endeavour to save a soul") or as realism (you cannot guarantee it, so do not cling to a departing spouse). After v15 the second fits the flow; v14 already gave the reason for hope.

The hub: remain where God called you (vv17–24). Said three times (vv17, 20, 24). Conversion does not require changing your outward station to please God. Guzik: "walk for the Lord in the place you are right now" — and do not try to undo the past by leaving a second wife to return to a first. Circumcision is Paul's example: "Married is nothing and unmarried is nothing, but keeping the commandments of God is what matters." A slave need not despair — he is "the Lord's freedman" — but should take freedom if he can. Henry: "Our comfort and happiness depend on what we are to Christ, not what we are in the world." Sproul's doctrine of vocation: every believer has a calling, lived "coram Deo." Spurgeon on v23: "Do not pin your faith to anybody's sleeve." None of this means staying in a sinful occupation.

"The present distress" (v26). Two readings: (1) a specific crisis then pressing on Corinth — Guzik: "some kind of local persecution or problem"; Henry: Christians "were grievously persecuted"; (2) the ongoing pressure of the age between Christ's comings. Either way it is counsel, not law: "if you marry, you have not sinned" (v28).

The time is shortened (vv29–31). *Systellō* — furled sails (Trapp in Guzik), a body wrapped for burial (Acts 5:6). Guzik answers those who say Paul expected the end too soon: Jesus told every generation to be ready. Hold marriage, grief, joy, possessions and the world "as though" — not neglecting them, but not gripping them. Spurgeon preached it as "A Drama in Five Acts." Henry: "It is not so much a world as the appearance of one."

Undistracted devotion (vv32–35). The married man's divided concern is not sin; Guzik: "There is something wrong if a married man does not care for how he may please his wife." Paul throws no noose (*brochos*). Henry: "Celibacy is not in itself a state of greater purity and sanctity than marriage." Spurgeon: "Many men and women rush into marriage."

"His virgin" (vv36–38) — three readings. (1) A father and his unmarried daughter — the NASB's italic "daughter," *gamizō* "give in marriage" (v38); Guzik's view. (2) A man and his fiancée — the ESV and NIV. (3) A man's own virginity — Henry's preference ("the man's virgin being meant of his virginity"). The point does not change: marrying "does well," not marrying "will do better" in that setting, and neither is sin.

Widows and Paul's authority (vv39–40). Death ends the bond; a widow is free to marry "only in the Lord" (Guzik: "only free to remarry another Christian"; Henry: "second marriages are not unlawful"). Paul's "I think that I also

have the Spirit of God" is a quiet claim to inspiration. Sproul's *Hard Sayings* lecture asks of this chapter's qualifiers, "Are there two levels of authority?" — and its title, "The Authority of Apostolic Teaching," is his answer.

Word study (Greek):

- **touch — *haptomai* (G680):** to touch, take hold; here a euphemism for sexual relations (v1).
- **immoralities — *porneia* (G4202):** sexual immorality of every kind (v2; compare 6:18).
- **duty — *opheilē* (G3782):** a debt owed (v3); marital love as something owed, not a favor.
- **have authority over — *exousiazō* (G1850):** to hold rights over (v4).
- **deprive — *apostereō* (G650):** to defraud, rob (v5; the verb of "defraud" in 6:8).
- **agreement — *symphōnos* (G4859):** mutual consent, "sounding together" (v5).
- **lack of self-control — *akrasia* (G192):** powerlessness over desire (v5); its opposite, **have self-control — *enkrateuomai* (G1467)** (v9; 9:25).
- **gift — *charisma* (G5486):** a grace-gift, the word of chapter 12 (v7).
- **burn — *pyroō* (G4448):** to be set on fire, inflamed (v9).
- **leave / separate — *chōrizō* (G5563):** to separate, depart (vv10, 11, 15; Mark 10:9).
- **divorce / send away — *aphiēmi* (G863):** to release, dismiss (vv11–13).
- **be reconciled — *katallassō* (G2644):** changed from enmity to friendship (v11; 2 Cor 5:18–20).
- **sanctified — *hagiazō* (G37):** set apart, made holy; perfect tense (v14).
- **under bondage — *douloō* (G1402):** to be enslaved (v15; Rom 6:18).
- **peace — *eirēnē* (G1515):** the calling of God over a broken home (v15).
- **call / calling — *kaleō* (G2564), *klēsis* (G2821):** God's summons to Himself; nine times in vv15–24.
- **freedman — *apeleutheros* (G558):** a slave who has been set free; only here (v22).
- **bought — *agorazō* (G59); price — *timē* (G5092):** the slave-market purchase (v23; 6:20; Rev 5:9).
- **distress — *anankē* (G318):** constraint, hardship (vv26, 37; Luke 21:23; 1 Cor 9:16).
- **bound — *deō* (G1210):** tied, bound in marriage (vv27, 39).
- **shortened — *systellō* (G4958):** drawn together, furled, wrapped up (v29; Acts 5:6).
- **form — *schēma* (G4976):** the outward shape or fashion of things (v31; Phil 2:8); **passing away — *paragō* (G3855).**
- **free from concern — *amerimnos* (G275); be concerned — *merimnaō* (G3309):** anxious care (vv32–34; Matt 6:25).
- **restraint — *brochos* (G1029):** a noose, lasso; only here (v35).
- **undistracted — *aperispastōs* (G563):** without being dragged about; only here (v35).
- **virgin — *parthenos* (G3933):** an unmarried person (vv25, 28, 34, 36–38); **give in marriage — *gamizō* (G1061)** (v38).
- **happier — *makarios* (G3107):** more blessed (v40).

Key insights to carry (from the Deep Dive):

1. **Paul writes the husband's debt first** — "I owe you," not "you owe me" (v3).
2. **Withholding love is a kind of fraud** — the verb of 6:8; three fences on any pause (v5).

3. **Both states are grace-gifts** — *charisma*; no one is gifted for immorality (v7).
4. **Marriage does not cure lust** — it is a remedy for burning, not a license to rush (v9).
5. **Separate is not single** — remain unmarried or be reconciled (v11).
6. **The believer sanctifies the home, not the reverse** (v14).
7. **"Called" is the chapter's key word** — nine times in vv15–24.
8. **Bought men are free men** — no man is master of a conscience Christ bought (v23).
9. **The sails are being furled** — hold the world "as though" (vv29–31).
10. **Paul labels every word he gives** — concession, command, apostolic word, opinion, the Spirit (vv6–40).

Cross-references: Gen 2:18, 24; Deut 24:1–4; Ezra 10:3; Ps 39:5–6; Mal 2:14–16; Matt 5:31–32; 6:25–34; 19:3–12; 22:30; 24:44; Mark 10:2–12; Luke 10:40; 21:23; Acts 5:6; 26:10; Rom 6:18; 7:2–3; 12:18; 1 Cor 6:8, 12–20; 9:5, 16, 25; 12:4; 2 Cor 5:18–20; 6:14; Gal 3:28; Eph 5:21–33; Phil 2:8; Col 3:11, 18–19; 1 Thess 4:3–8; 1 Tim 4:1–5; Heb 13:4; 1 Pet 3:1–7; 1 John 2:17; Rev 5:9.

03 Application

HOW DOES IT CHANGE ME?

KEY VERSE · 1 CORINTHIANS 7:35

"This I say for your own benefit; not to put a restraint upon you, but to promote what is appropriate and to secure ☆undistracted devotion to the Lord."

FIGURE · A DRAMA IN FIVE ACTS (VV29–31)

"THE TIME HAS BEEN SHORTENED" (v29) — sails furled as the ship nears harbor

ACT I HAVE WIVES	ACT II WEEP	ACT III REJOICE	ACT IV BUY	ACT V USE THE WORLD
as though they had none	*as though they did not weep*	*as though they did not rejoice*	*as though they did not possess*	*as though they did not make full use*
not set the heart too much on it	grief is brief; hope remains	enjoy, but hold it loosely	possess without being possessed	use it, do not abuse it

Spurgeon preached these lines as "A Drama in Five Acts" (1862); Henry's counsel in the cream boxes.

"for the form of this world is passing away" (v31) — σχῆμα, the outward shape, the stage set

Five ordinary parts of life, each held "as though" — not despised, but held loosely, because the stage set of this world is already being struck.

Command to obey — for the married men (me first). "The husband must fulfill his duty to his wife" (v3). Paul wrote the husband's duty first. I don't own my body; my wife does — and she shares that claim with joy, not as a weapon. "Stop depriving one another" (v5) covers more than the bedroom: Guzik is right that withheld tenderness, attention and romance are a kind of defrauding too. Today I'll give my wife something I've been holding back — time, a kind word, my full attention.

Warning to heed — the gap the enemy waits for. "So that Satan will not tempt you because of your lack of self-control" (v5). A marriage with distance in it is a marriage with an open door. For the men I walk with who fight sexual sin: isolation inside a marriage is not holiness, and resentment in the bedroom is not purity. Bring it into the light, talk with your wife, and get help together.

For the single men in recovery — your singleness is a gift, not a waiting room. "Each man has his own gift from God" (v7). Singleness is not a penalty for your past. It is *charisma* — the same word as the gifts of chapter 12. And if desire burns, Paul's answer is not shame and not secret sin; it is honest, God-honoring marriage in His time (v9), and until then the self-control the Spirit gives (Gal 5:23). Don't rush a marriage to fix a lust problem; marriage does not cure lust. Walk with Christ and your brothers first.

For the men carrying a divorce. Some of the men I serve have a broken marriage behind them — some caused, some suffered. Chapter 7 is not a club. "Be reconciled" (v11) is a real door where it is still open; and where an unbelieving spouse has walked away, "God has called us to peace" (v15). Whatever my past, the next step is the same: honesty before God, counsel from mature believers, and no new decisions made in a hurry or in secret.

Promise to trust — God meets you where you are. "Each man must remain in that condition in which he was called" (v20). Called while a slave? "Do not worry about it" (v21). That word reaches into a cell. Brother, if you came to Christ behind the wire, you did not miss your calling — you are "the Lord's freedman" (v22) today, before the gate ever opens. Serve Him on the tier. And if you're just out, you don't need a new life in place by Friday to please God; walk with Him in the halfway house, the entry-level job, the bus ride.

Command to obey — don't trade one master for another. "You were bought with a price; do not become slaves of men" (v23). A man out of the bottle or out of prison can quickly hand his life to a new master — a person, a crowd, a habit, even a ministry leader who expects too much. Christ paid for me with His blood; I follow men only as far as they follow Him.

Example to follow — hold this world loosely. "The time has been shortened" (v29) — the sails are coming in. I can love my wife, grieve my losses, enjoy what God gives, own a truck and a house, and still keep my hands open, "for the form of this world is passing away" (v31).

Questions for the table (from the Deep Dive):

1. In my marriage (or my last one), was I living "I owe you" or "you owe me"? What would it look like to pay what I owe this week? (7:3–5; Eph 5:25) *The husband's debt is written first, and it includes affection, not only frequency.*
2. If I am single, do I treat it as a waiting room or as a gift? What could I do for the Lord now that I could not do with a family? (7:7, 32–35) *Charisma — the same word as the gifts of chapter 12.*
3. Who in this room carries a divorce? What does Paul offer that is neither a club nor a shrug? (7:10–16; Mark 10:9) *Two doors where it is still open: remain, or be reconciled; and where an unbeliever left, "God has called us to peace."*
4. What station am I waiting to change before I really serve God — getting out, getting married, getting a better job? (7:17, 20, 24) *"As God has called each, in this manner let him walk" — said three times.*
5. Who or what has become my master since I got free — a person, a crowd, a habit, a leader? (7:22–23; 6:20) *Spurgeon: "Do not pin your faith to anybody's sleeve."*
6. Which of the five "as though" scenes holds my heart too tightly — a person, a grief, a joy, a possession, the world itself? (7:29–31; 1 John 2:17) *Henry: possess what you must shortly leave without being possessed by it.*

Worship. God made marriage in Eden; He gives singleness as a grace, not a sentence; He calls men to Himself in cells and on job sites; and He bought us with His Son's blood so that no one else would own us.

Prayer. Lord Jesus, You bought me with a price. Make me a husband who gives rather than takes, and make the single brothers I serve content and pure in the gift You have given them. Bring peace where marriages have broken, and wisdom for every hard decision. Meet each man where You called him — in a cell, a halfway house, a home — and teach us all to live with undistracted devotion to You, because this world is passing away and You are not. Amen.

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