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## 1 Corinthians 7:1-7 - To Marry Or Not?

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Shall we open our Bibles tonight to 1 Corinthians 7 to continue our study through Paul's letter to the Corinthians?

Paul had planted this church over an 18-month period on his second missionary journey, but it was kind of like one of those places that you just would never really want to visit. Forget about what happens in Vegas stays in Vegas; nothing stayed in Corinth. It was a terribly vile place. When Paul showed up there by himself and had been there for several months waiting for his team to arrive, he was tremendously disturbed, depressed. Things had not gone well. Oh, there'd been fruit, but on the end of all the fruit had been beatings and being chased out of town, and he just hadn't had a good time in Europe. And so he was a little quieter until they showed up, and then he began to minister. But again he was worried about the fallout. The gospel always brings life, but it also brings a lot of persecution, and it was certainly the case for him. It was the Lord that came to Paul and said, "Look, I've got a lot of people in this city. No one's going to hurt you. I'll take care of you. I've got your back. Preach!" And he did. And this church was established, and maybe it was six or eight years later that Paul, on his third mission journey, was planting a church in Ephesus when he began to hear about some of the troubles here. He got a letter from this church; it was the first one. He would write back; we don't have his response. It is mentioned in 1 Corinthians 5:9; it's also mentioned this evening in chapter 7:1. Paul had had some discussions back and forth with them. He had had a visit from some of the elders from the church there in Ephesus; he'd met some ladies who had also been involved in one of the home groups. And what he heard was not good. And so, because he loved the church, he wanted to write to help them. And so both of these letters are very corrective. They go after problems. They try to address problems that you would maybe face. And this was an interesting place because it was....the holiness of God and the unholiness of the world in its worst way.

For the first four chapters or so, Paul talked to them about the carnality that was involved in the church there. They were like little kids. They were taking sides depending on who baptized them, who had taught them, who was the best and all. And Paul just said, "Look, Jesus saved us. I didn't." Paul said, "Apollos didn't save you. Jesus saved you." And we're all going to have to stand before the Lord with that understanding, and one day He's going to come and judge our motives and our works."

In chapter 5, he talked to them about their liberal attitudes, their tolerance; and there was sexual sin in the church. There was a fellow who was with his father's wife. Everything seemed to be fine with them. No one seemed to be bothered by it. Paul said, "That's not the way the church lives. We've got to help each other to do the right

thing, to restore one another to faith.” And he said, “You should deal with this and move him along if that’s how he’s going to live. We can’t have this in the church.”

In chapter 6, he talked to them about suing each other in court before the world, trying to get their little pound of flesh from each other in the wisdom of the world. And he said, “This is not the way the church handles division. We should be working these things out ourselves.” And finally, as he ended in chapter 6, he talked about how sexual sin was a violation against your own body because once you got saved the Holy Spirit came to live in you; you’re His temple, and He has come to dwell in you. It’s a sin against your own body.

I think with all of that discussion, chapter 7 might seem fairly logical because in one way, it’s kind of a new teaching, but it was no doubt brought about by all the things he’d been talking to them about. They had asked him a question back, like I said, in chapter 5. Paul will bring up another question they asked today.

Several years ago, the Lord led me to do a long series of studies on “Marriage and Remarriage and Divorce,” maybe seven hours worth of stuff. It covered, I think, every verse in the Bible about marriage or any direction that we might get. We’re only going to cover a little bit of that in the next couple of weeks, but if you’re interested I think those are all still recorded, and you can certainly find those in the bookstore, I think maybe online as well.

The Bible would teach that marriage is an honorable place for you and me to be. It was God’s idea. It is meant for life. If you want to know where God’s interest was in marriages, you go back to Genesis 2, and you find that the LORD gave us marriage for companionship, for procreation, for personal growth, for intimacy. It ultimately meets the needs of man. It reflects the relationship God has with the church. It is a symbol that is used the most to convey to us our relationship as the bride of Christ to our Lord Himself. Just as a general observation, God hates divorce. He permits it in cases of adultery, but even then He prefers forgiveness and restoration. If you read the book of Hosea, where the LORD uses His spiritual relationship with Israel and says, “You’ve been unfaithful to Me,” it is still His willingness to forgive their unfaithfulness, and it is only hard-hearted kind of unrepentant adultery that really finds itself at the end of the rope with no alternatives. In chapter 3 of Genesis, you can find the effect of the fall on marriage, and it really did throw a wrench to the whole.....the husband being the head of his home, the high priest of his home, and being responsible for the spiritual well-being of his family. Instead, what you find there is this need to dominate and the wife wanting to rebel against him and be in charge. There’s just that whole upside down relationship that sin brought into a relationship that before sin was fine. It was the way God intended.

And so when you get to the New Testament, and you begin to read about the work of the Holy Spirit in the new birth, it really – when you get to Ephesians and it talks a lot about marriage in here as well – it’s almost like returning you to a pre-fall joy of

marriage again. God would like to give you back what sin took away when it comes to marriage and relationship.

The Lord even answers the critics in the gospels where they said (Matthew 19:1-10), “Well, Moses allowed for divorce in instances of things other than sexual immorality, something short of adultery.” And Jesus said, “Well, first of all, that brought death so that made the end of it, mostly.” But Jesus said, “You know, He only allowed that for the hardness of your heart. But God’s intention from the beginning was not that at all.”

The Scriptures are always very consistent when it comes to the principles regarding marriage. God’s plans are good. We probably spend more time going over them with people than any other counseling that we do. We spend a lot of time with folks that are getting married, six months or so, just making sure.....doing a wedding’s easy. Getting people ready to get married....that’s the challenge, isn’t it? So that’s hopefully where we invest our time.

But, like I said, Jesus did not address anything but God’s original intention for marriage. And He spoke about adultery as being the only thing that can violate and then allow for divorce and effectively because divorce, at least under the Law, brought death to the marriage bond. So Jesus speaks to the Jews under the Law and expresses the will of God under those confines.

Now we move forward in the Bible, and we get to the place where people start getting saved. The Gentiles are now coming to the Lord in record numbers. And as they begin to grow, they begin to ask valid questions; especially in the communities like Corinth. They had grown up without God’s Word. Their situations were different. They needed to be addressed. “Now, what do I do as God’s child in the situation that I find myself?” There were a lot of folks coming to the Lord with a lot of baggage and less-than-honorable backgrounds. “What do I do? How do I respond to the things that I’m facing now, myself?” So they had direct questions about divorce and getting remarried, valid concerns. This chapter is probably the single greatest information chapter on that, that we have. Paul, in his letter to the saints, addresses the situational problems that arise in the culture, and how do I apply God’s Word to the situation that I find myself in? What happens to the fellow who comes to the Lord and he’s already been married five times and now he’s divorced? Whose wife is mine? Can I get married again? What happens to me now that I’ve come out of that life? Should I stay single? Should I be celibate? Is it more spiritual? I’m living with a woman; we have three children, we’ve been together twelve years. Is that a marriage in God’s sight? How does that work out, exactly?

And, like I said, this chapter’s long, but we’re going to do it in two weeks. We’re only going to do seven verses tonight; we’re having communion. We’ll take the rest next week, and all the exceptions are next week. So now you’ll have to come back, I guess. (Laughing) But they’re very specific to marriage and remarriage and divorce, and we will find Paul reiterating, at least early on, the things that the Lord commands. He says, in verse 10, “This is what I command to the marriage, yet it’s not my command, it is the Lord’s,” there in verse 10, as it pertains to divorce. He will reiterate Jesus’ plain

teaching, if you will, but Paul will also, led by the Holy Spirit, give us his opinion starting in verse 25. He will say, "I have no command from the Lord, but I'll give you my judgment as one who trusts in the Lord in His mercy and His trustworthiness," and he will begin to deal with the circumstances and say to them, "This carries the full weight of biblical authority." In fact, he'll say, in verse 40 at the end, "This is my judgment, and I think I have the Spirit of the Lord." And Paul spoke as an apostle, and the Lord had raised him up. I think he wrote at the end of chapter 4 of 1 Corinthians (verses 18-21), "I'm going to come, and I'll see if the word of those that are puffed up have any power because the kingdom of God is not just in word, it comes in power. So, when I show up, shall I come with a rod, or shall I come in gentleness?" Paul had power as an apostle. God had raised them up to certainly write out for us the Scriptures. So Paul shares again what Jesus had explicitly taught and then, led by the Spirit, will cover for the Corinthians (in all of that mess) the problems and issues and struggles that the saints there were facing.

So tonight and next week we will have this in-depth discussion about sexual relationships. I hope your kids are in Sunday school. We've already talked, I think, a little bit about the wretched place that Corinth was. We, on our trips following Paul's footsteps through Europe, have stopped there, and to me it's one of the most moving places because it was a place that Paul about gave up. And yet having the Lord there to encourage him, did this wonderful work. And so....but the verb to "Corinthianize" meant to commit sexual sin. It was a name that described, if you will, the city. I live in north fornication. It's ridiculous. (Laughing) But that's exactly the way this town was. It was wretched, and it was vile. The ruins from Corinth that have been unearthed over the years contain many gross statues with distorted sex organs. It was the temple of Apollo that was there; 1,000 prostitutes a night would come down the hill into the town and would call that religion; and a world that was lost would certainly embrace that and follow after that.

If you've been to Amish country in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, you know there's a town there called Intercourse. It didn't used to be called that; it used to be called Cross Keys after the tavern that was made there. But sixty years later they changed it to Intercourse, and nobody knows why. Well, I'll tell you what. There's nothing improper there, but trust me, Corinth lived up to its billing and lived up to its name.

So, put yourself in the shoes of the folks getting this letter. Paul writes to a church that, by the Holy Spirit's work and by God's protection, had gathered many together. New believers in Christ with lots of questions. All they knew was idolatry, sexual perversion; never exposed to the Scriptures. Not to mention the fact that, at least in the Roman government, slaves were coming to Jesus in record numbers and at least, from a perspective of 1<sup>st</sup>-century Rome, marriage to the Romans fell under four different categories. There was the tent companionship – there were men owning slaves who bred slaves for laborers; they just bred them (how awful is that, no ceremony) at the discretion of the owner. And what happens now if this fellow gets saved and he remembers all his children? And who's my wife? What do I do with my life now? How do I stand before God? How does this all work out? There was a common law

marriage that was given by the Roman government in the 1<sup>st</sup> century after one year of living together. But what if living together for three years like this and now one of you gets saved? What do I do now? Any many of these folks were coming to church, and they just wanted to know, “What does God want?” There was a marriage by sale – old practice of parents selling their children by arrangement for the sake of gain, like a merger. And there was a nobility wedding that took place in 1<sup>st</sup> century Rome that was much like we see today. There was a fancy party, there was a ring exchanged, there was a ring placed on the third finger of the left hand because some Roman sage said through that finger goes the nerve that goes to the heart. They had a cake, they had veils, they had music, they had wreaths. They had an oral commitment and a written commitment. It was pretty much the kind of wedding that we might see today.

So, here’s Paul, and he’s in Ephesus. He’s been gone for seven or eight years, but he knows the town very well, and now he’s like a missionary in a foreign country trying to apply the Bible into the local dialect, trying to win a people to Christ and give them some directions from the Lord as to the mess that they’ve made. It’s kind of like winning a tribe to Christ and finding out that all of the men in the tribe have ten wives. And there’ve been those like..... “What do we do now?” Much of the Roman nobility weddings were adopted by the Catholic Church for marriage. At the time of the Reformation, Protestant churches adopted them as well as acceptable. But for Paul and these Corinthian saints, it was the confusing scenarios that they tried to address and were asking about. Add to that what you already know now. Historically, the Romans in the 1<sup>st</sup> century had prolific divorce rates. Now you can look them up; they were certainly recorded. Barclay tells us that it wasn’t wrong to have a guy on his twenty-seventh marriage marrying a woman who’s been married twenty-five times before. What a mess! Welcome to the world. Lord, what are we going to do now? So, out of that culture comes sinners to Jesus, wondering what to do. It’s kind of like unscrambling an egg. So Paul gives principles that I think would be very helpful. In fact, I think they answer all of those questions in forty verses.

Seneca and Juvenal, who are both Roman poets from 60 to about 140 A.D. or something, spoke of how large the homosexual communities were in Rome and the allowance of polygamy and concubines, where you had wives for every different purpose, compounding the problem. So, for Paul, the situation he faced was difficult, it was perplexing. And the church sent questions, and they asked, “What do we do?” In the first seven verses – and it’ll be easy tonight – they only ask Paul about being single. And is being single or celibate a better spiritual choice than being married? And I think it is probably a kneejerk reaction to some of the things that they were seeing. They wanted to get away from that sinfulness in the culture and all around them. “Maybe it’d just be better if I just separated myself for the Lord.”

Next week, beginning in verse 8, we’re going to take all of the various scenarios that they might have faced, and I think that we’ll be able to discover a lot of things by seeing some of the words that Paul uses about being married and being a virgin and being unmarried and being a widow. He defines all of the terms, so it would be easy, I think, for us to follow.

Verse 1, "Now concerning the things of which you wrote to me:" (like I said, chapter 5:9, he mentions it as well) "It is good for a man not to touch a woman." I think introducing the reason for this chapter, as Paul is writing to answer various questions he had received..... we're not given the questions, but we are given the answers, and the answers, I think, help us to deduce the questions. Certainly you would figure this one out on your own. Paul would seek to answer virtually every eventuality relating to marriage with the Scriptures. From his first response here, though, it would seem that there had been a belief circulating that remaining single and celibate was the most spiritual route to take; you know, more godly than getting married, having sexual relationships. I can imagine that this opinion, especially since these guys were taking a lot of sides, "We're more spiritual than you are." "Why?" "We're single, and we're gonna stay that way." And it was a kneejerk reaction to what they had been delivered from in Christ. So, Paul, "Is true abstinence spiritually preferred over marriage and physical union in marriage?" That's the question. And verses 2-7 Paul gives the answer. And he starts with, verse 1, "It is good for a man not to touch a woman." Celibacy is good. The word "*kalos*" is a word that means acceptable or honorable. The word "not to touch" is obviously a euphemism for sexual intercourse. It is found that way throughout the Scriptures. You can look at it in Genesis 20, Proverbs 6; there're just a lot of places. Holding hands isn't a sin, okay? That's not what this is saying.

"Nevertheless," verse 2, "because of sexual immorality, let each man have his own wife, and let each woman have her own husband." It's good to stay celibate. However, unfulfilled sexual desires can be a tremendous source of temptation and consternation for most people; and even more so when you're asked to deal with them in such a promiscuous society in 1<sup>st</sup> century Rome. Or, if you'd like, 21<sup>st</sup> century America. Celibacy is a good thing, but it is not a viable way of life for most people. The swinging life is obviously never okay. It is okay to be celibate if that's what God has called you to. And Paul's point is going to be: it's the best way to live if that's where God has called you. But since most people aren't called there, there's nothing wrong with getting married and staying in that relationship for life. In Matthew 19:12, Jesus said to the disciples, "There are those who have been eunuchs from their birth; there are also those who have been made eunuchs by man and who've made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake." So, if you can accept it, accept it. But, look, the bottom line is unless you're called to be single, it's going to be a terribly difficult way of life, and he will say it's not more spiritual; it's good but it's not practical for most folks. Most of us would fall into sin over time if they decided to take this as life's course, especially if they're called to be married. Like Adam and Eve were called to be married. If Adam had stayed by himself, that wouldn't have been good. Growing up as a Catholic, it might be good for the Catholic Church to read their Bibles and let their priests get married; save themselves and their children a lot of grief.

So, unless you're called to it, it would probably not be better to pursue that way of life. And if the opinion in the church was, "We're the most spiritual," the answer was, "Not so. You're not more spiritual. In fact, you're not more spiritual at all if that's not where God has called you to be." Filled with sexual temptations, it is better that you have your

own husband, your own wife; it's a possessive term that means exclusivity or monogamy. Have one. Have one. You have a wife and a husband. When Genesis 2 lays out for us the purposes of the creation of marriage - and it was companionship first and then procreation and then creating a family environment for the generation that followed to grow up, and personal strength, and sexual fulfillment, and be a type of a relationship with God - those are all reflected in a relationship of a man and a woman in marriage. Celibacy is good, but it is only good for those specifically called to it. And since that's the issue, it's certainly not superior.

Now, I don't know if you were called to be single. I'm not. I would hate to be single. I like being married. In fact, my wife and I - this week - celebrated 44 years of being married; 44!! (Applause) Somebody said, "How do you do it?" I said, "It's been easy. I don't know why she complains. It's been easy for me." (Laughing) It's been a great blessing from the Lord.

So, marriage can't just be an escape valve for sexually-charged people. Paul has a much higher opinion of it than that. But his stress here is the legitimate outlet in marriage for sexual relationships is ordained by the Lord and it is only good to stay celibate if that's where God has called you to be. Otherwise, it's going to be difficult.

He goes on in verse 3, and he said, "Let the husband render to his wife the affection due her, and likewise also the wife to her husband. 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. 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." One thing for sure: celibacy should never be practiced in marriage. It is not the spiritual way to go. You shouldn't deny or neglect the responsibility that you have to one another. The word "render" - see that word here? - means to fulfill your duty. It's an imperative, but it's written in the present tense which means that it is something that should be continued on a regular basis. Render to your wife the affection due her and vice versa. With marriage comes the responsibility to sexually satisfy your mate. Now we get people sometimes that come in for counseling that have decided they will use that responsibility as a tool for argument, for reward, for punishment. "Well, if you're going to treat me like that, you can sleep in the other room!" Yet it is the kindness of love that satisfies its partner and keeps them from the temptation that often the flesh will find if it isn't satisfied, especially if you're called to be married. So, sexual relationship between husband and wife is proper, and it's a privilege, and it's a pleasure, and it's regular, and it comes with responsibilities. And Paul wants them to see that. It isn't more glorious to be single, but if you're married, it comes with more responsibility.

And notice in verse 4, here, that Paul reinforces the mutuality of this obligation. In our lives as believers, our bodies are the temple of the Holy Spirit. You have been bought with a price; you are not your own. In the marital sense, or in the sexual sense, your body also belongs to your partner because you've been made one flesh. And a violation of that is adultery; it violates that one-flesh relationship. Failure to submit to

one another not only dishonors the Lord, it can cause lots of trouble in the homes. I like to use this truth when I gain too much weight, so I say to my wife, "Your body needs work." (Laughing) Actually.....it's funnier when I said it to myself. It's all right. (Laughing) Nevermind.

So don't deny one another. Yet, at the same time, love would dictate that no unreasonable demands are upon each other as well. The idea is physical expressions of love are mutual and regular and honorable in the Lord's sight.

We read, in verse 5, that Paul goes one step further and ratchets up the language. He says, "Don't deprive one another." It is written not as a suggestion but as an emphatic command. The only exception is for the mutual consent for a time for spiritual reasons. "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." So, all other abstentions have no spiritual benefit; they can hurt you, they can place you into positions of temptation, they can give Satan a place to exploit because of your lack of consistency. Married folks ought to stay together on a regular basis. Paul says "fasting and prayer for a time." Great if you both agree. But then coming together when the urgent spiritual needs have passed, resume normal relationships physically as God intends. Somebody asked me in counseling a while back, "How often is normal?" And I went, "I have no idea. It's not in here. I don't know." But here, he gives us the limits. You have to keep both of you from temptations so they're, I guess, determined by needs and mutual agreement, always driven by love. Satan will be right there to try to mess it up otherwise. The single greatest cause for divorce, even to this day, is unfaithfulness, is adultery; still to this day. Now a lot of people are not getting married today. The marriage rate has so dropped in the last fifteen years. But that doesn't mean God's Word has changed. So is marriage and sexual relationships in marriage inferior to celibacy in terms of spiritual value? And the answer is: no way.

Then Paul says this, in verse 6, "But I say this as a concession, not as a commandment. For I wish 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" (manner). Paul is, I think, well aware of the benefits of being single, and he also understands the glory and the privilege that comes from being married. We don't want anyone to misinterpret his remarks as a command one to the other, so he said, "Look, it's good to be celibate, it's good to be married. Don't let anyone tell you one is more spiritual than the other. It's a matter of God's calling." And yet Paul realizes (verse 7 – the first part) that being single provided a tremendous amount of freedom to him and liberty and, in that sense, he wished that everyone in the kingdom of God could have that kind of freedom to serve the Lord. But he's not naïve to think that that's possible.

If you look down at verse 28, he says this, "But even if you do marry, you have not sinned; and if a virgin marries, she has not sinned. Nevertheless such will have trouble in the flesh, but I would spare you. But this I say, brethren, the time is short, so that from now on even those who have wives should be as though they had none, those who weep as though they did not weep, those who rejoice as though they did not rejoice, those who buy as though they did not possess, and those who use this world as



not misusing it. For the form of this world is passing away.” Paul’s point is: we’re living in desperate times, and we’re preoccupied with a lot of things, and our focus should be on the divine things.

Look at verse 32, “But I want you to be without care. He who is unmarried cares for the things of the Lord – how he may please the Lord. But he who is married cares about the things of the world – how he may please his wife.” Well, that’s true. I mean, there’s a lot to be said for being married. It takes a lot of work. It takes a lot of commitment. It takes a lot to keep your house a home where the Lord is honored. Paul saw the single life as more carefree. And, like I said, I think there’s a lot of truth to that. He goes on in verse 34, and he says, “There is a difference between a wife and a virgin. The unmarried woman cares about the things of the Lord, that she may be holy both in body and in spirit. But she who is married cares about the things of the world – how she may please her husband.” And that’s true. Yet God established marriage and the family and gave us gifts, and unless you’re called, like Paul was, to live this kind of life, no way are you going to pull that off. That doesn’t mean Paul doesn’t see the benefit of it because his focus is on the spiritual benefit of our lives to the kingdom of God.

It does appear, and I think that it is fairly clear, that Paul was married once. He was a member of the Sanhedrin; the Sanhedrin required that men be married to be a part of that body of rulership in Israel. By the time Paul is saved, we never read about a wife at all. And so whatever may have happened, we’re just not given any information. But Paul concludes this section in verse 7 by saying: what has God called you to be? What gift have you been given? What has God called you to do since both are gifts? Only you can determine if He’s called you and enabled you to stay single or to stay married. Both are right in God’s eyes. There’s not a better versus a worse one. Both are profitable. Chapter 9:5 Paul talks about that as well. “Do we have no right to take along a believing wife, as do also the other apostles, the brothers of the Lord, and Cephas? Or is it only Barnabas and I who have no right to refrain from working?” So Paul saw the benefit of both, but he’s also being honest in his personal opinion, if that’s what you’re asking. He saw a tremendous benefit in staying single. Peter and Paul had mighty ministries. Peter was married. Paul, by this time, was single.

What if you’re called to be married, and you don’t have a partner yet? That’s usually the plight, isn’t it? You that are single, I bet you can say, “Amen.” Unless you’re called to be single, there’s that waiting game, isn’t there? And, “Lord, what are You doing in my life?” And it can be very frustrating. But I don’t think it needs to be. At least from everything that we’ve learned from the Scriptures, the time of waiting for God to bring you a mate just gives you time to be the godly person that you ought to be so that when the mate comes around, they’ll like what they see. And you’ll find someone who is there as well. There are a lot of folks in the church – especially young folks – who are preoccupied with finding that perfect someone. They don’t come to church to worship; they come to scout. (Laughing) “I see this one over there and this one.....” Twenty-four hours a day, looking for Mr. Right, wearing “I’m Available” t-shirts. “I’m available, here’s my phone number.” I think if you wait on the Lord and serve Him and not let that be a preoccupation, you’ll find that the Lord will bring Eve to you like he brought her to

Adam or vice versa. Single people should be, in my opinion, the most active people in the church. (Clapping) Thank you. (Laughing) Thank you very much. The worship team gets more applause than that! Come on, man! (Laughing) No. I think that's true. They have the most time on their hands. They're the least preoccupied with home and family and children and responsibility, and they should step up and be that kind of active group. But if you're content with Jesus, if you're walking with Him as a young person, if you are committed to Him and seek Him first, God will, in due time, bring that special someone to you. And, in the process, you'll become that perfect spouse; the kind of person that someone that loves the Lord would want to be with. I'll tell you what. You'd better do it now while you're single. Because the minute you get married, there're going to be a whole lot of things pulling on your time. But now you have the time that you need.

In regards to physical temptations, look, the desire is from the Lord; the timing is from hell. That's the way that works, right? You have a desire for intimacy, but you have no position to pursue it. So now you're in this battle. But you should know married people are in that battle, too. They have to commit themselves to one person and be faithful. I would say to you – channel your energy towards ministry in a local body, and preoccupy yourself with the Lord. Find a bunch of people that you can be accountable to. Hang around in groups of people, even when you're dating, initially. Pray for purity, and learn the great lesson in the Bible – run! The guy that says to me, “Yeah, I fell into sin with my girlfriend last night.” “Where were you?” “Well, we were parked outside, 3:00 in the morning, in a dark alley.” “Oh, what happened?” Goofball. Just keep yourself, keep yourself. That's the key, isn't it? The fear of the Lord is pure, it's clean. You know?

Finally, don't just seek to get married. Don't get on every plane leaving the airport. Let God put you together. Be yourself. Be yourself. Be strong with your spiritual commitments. Let God do the rest. Be content. God has a great plan for you, and He's got a great plan for your mate. It's His problem, isn't it? You just need to depend on Him. If you live that way, I think eventually people will beat a path to your door. At least the godly will.

So, that's the first question that's being asked here: is it more spiritual to stay single? There were even some dads (if you read down to verse 36, verse 37, verse 38) that were so terrified of allowing their daughters to get married because they'd been taught that it was more spiritual for them to stay single. Paul said, “No, only if God calls you to it.”

Shall we pray?

Submitted by Maureen Dickson  
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