

## **1 Corinthians 7:12-40**

### **Pastor John Miller**

I want you to just peek at one verse. I'm not going to go all the way back to verse 1, but go back to 1 Corinthians 7:1 where Paul says, "Now concerning the things whereof ye wrote unto me: It is good for a man not to touch a woman." In verses 1-7 he's talking to married people; he's talking to those that are married. In verses 8-9, he's actually speaking to unmarried and widows. We saw also, verses 10-11, that he's speaking to Christian couples.

Tonight we come to verse 12 where we left off, and we have Paul speaking to Christians married to non-Christians, people who came to faith in Jesus Christ, got saved, and their spouse, whether the wife or the husband, is not a believer. Evidently, in Corinth, they were thinking that because they were married to a heathen that they needed to divorce and leave them, to dissolve the marriage and go find themselves a Christian spouse; so Paul's addressing that issue. He's going to tell them, "No, you're not to get a divorce just because you find yourself now a Christian married to a non-Christian." He's going to say very clearly that if you are not yet married and you are a Christian, you only marry in the Lord, you only marry a Christian. The Bible says, "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers," so you're not to be marrying a nonbeliever.

Let's read beginning at verse 12. Paul says, "But to the rest speak I, not the Lord: If any brother hath a wife that believeth not, and she be pleased to dwell with him, let him not put her away." That "put her away" is a reference to divorce, not just sticking her off somewhere. Verse 13, "And the woman which hath an husband that believeth not, and if he be pleased to dwell with her, let her not leave him,"—again the thought is that it's a divorce or the dissolving of the marriage union. Verse 14, "For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband: else were your children unclean; but now are they holy. 15 But if the unbelieving depart,"—it's not your doing, you're saved and they are not pleased to dwell with you, so—"if the unbelieving depart"—or divorce or leave—"let him depart. A brother or a sister is not under bondage in such cases: but God hath called us to peace. 16 For what knowest thou, O wife, whether thou shalt save thy husband? or how knowest thou, O man, whether thou shalt save thy wife?"

We don't know what the question was, we have the answer, but we're only kind of guessing that it had to do with, "I'm saved now. My wife's not a Christian. Should I divorce or leave her?" "I'm saved now. My husband's not a Christian. Should I find a good Christian man at Revival Christian Fellowship on Wednesday night or should I just stick with this heathen."

Go back with me to verse 12, "But to the rest speak I, not the Lord . . . ." What is Paul saying there? He's saying that Jesus did not specifically address this scenario. It's impossible, by the way, whenever I teach a passage like that I cannot cover every aspect of marriage, divorce, and singleness. I'm going to miss things. Things are going to fall through the cracks. Now, if you want to ask questions, I'll be available after church tonight, and we'll stick around and talk, but I'm going to do my best to stick to the text. He's basically saying that the Lord did not

specifically address this issue, but we know again at the end of the chapter he says, “I have the Spirit of the Lord,” I’m writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. He says, “But to the rest speak I, not the Lord.” It doesn’t mean that it’s not inspired by the Holy Spirit or the Word of God.

Paul says, “If any brother,”—so this is a Christian—“hath a wife that believeth not”—so that’s very clear she is not a Christian. He uses the expression “believeth not,” so she’s an unbeliever. It’s the same as being not a Christian. Being a Christian is believing in Jesus Christ, being then regenerated by the Holy Spirit and indwelt by the Spirit, you become a child of God. This is a brother who has a wife that’s not a Christian, but “ . . . she be pleased to dwell with him, let him not put her away,”—you are not to put her away, you’re not to get a divorce. Marriage should continue. You don’t get a divorce because your husband or your wife is not a believer. Then, Paul reverses, verse 13, “And the woman which hath an husband that believeth not, and if he be pleased to dwell with her, let her not leave him.” You’re not to initiate a divorce in that situation, so we’re not to dissolve the marriage.

Verse 14, “For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife”—notice, beginning in verse 14, he’s giving us the rationale or the reason for what he just taught. He’s giving us the reason, the rationale, it starts with the word “for.” “For the unbelieving husband”—and here’s the first reason —“is sanctified by the wife . . .” Now, don’t misunderstand what that’s saying, what it means.

Paul’s not teaching here that if you become a Christian, your unsaved spouse is automatically saved and going to heaven. There’s a passage in the book of Acts where the Philippian jailer, Acts 16, “ . . . what must I do to be saved? And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house.” Some have interpreted that wrongly, falsely, and said, “If you become a Christian, then everyone in your family is going to get saved and go to heaven.” I don’t believe that’s taught in the Bible. I don’t believe that’s borne out in life. There’s no guarantee that you becoming a Christian means that your spouse will get saved. I think that’s just facing reality. They will be saved if they believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, but it’s not automatic. It’s not just carte blanche. It’s not just automatic with your salvation that your spouse is going to get saved.

What is Paul saying there, “ . . . the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband . . .” Listen carefully. What he’s saying is that your presence in the marriage as a Christian will have a sanctifying effect and influence on your unsaved spouse. If you leave your husband, you divorce your husband or run from your unsaved spouse, what hope do you have that they’ll come to the Lord? So, your presence there—your prayers, your godly life before them—is to be a sanctifying influence upon them.

Now, I won’t have us turn there, but please write down 1 Peter 3:1-6. In 1 Peter 3:1-6, it’s a very, very clear teaching by Peter for a wife who’s married to an unsaved husband, and he tells her, “You’re not going to see him saved by your words, you’re going to see him saved by your works.” It’s not preaching at—you know, take your lipstick and write “Repent!” on the mirror in the bathroom in the morning or put a tract in his sandwich when he goes to work in the morning

or glue the radio dial on KWAVE so he'll hear the gospel when he drives his car—it's the way that you live by the godly life you live in submission and obedience to God.

That's all that Paul's saying. He's not saying they're going to be saved. He's saying that you shouldn't abandon your unsaved spouse because your life has a sanctifying effect or influence upon them. It's so very, very important.

Here's the second reason in verse 14. He says, “. . . else were your children unclean; but now are they holy.” The word “sanctified” and “holy” both come from the same root word. They mean basically the same thing. They mean set apart as holy. It's true the Bible does use the term “sanctified” for salvation, but here the word is used differently. It's used that you're going to have an influence, you're going to have an impact, you're going to have a sanctifying...I like to use the term “sanctifying influence” on their life. So, you stay in the marriage if they're “. . . pleased to dwell with”—you, and you pray that your life as well as your words will be an influence upon them that they will come to faith.

How many men today who came to Christ came because their wife first got saved and prayed for them, loved them, served them, and was a godly example to them. How many women come to Christ because of a husband who's been changed by the power of God, and they've seen the godly example of their spouse, their husband, and they've come to faith in Jesus Christ. So, we're not to dissolve the marriage, the marriage should continue until, we're going to see tonight, until death do us part as we commit to a lifetime of marriage.

Verse 15, Paul says, “But if the unbelieving depart,”—and, by the way, I didn't specifically mention too much about the children. Again, this is a sanctifying influence on your children. Even if you're in a marriage where only one, the husband or just the wife, is saved, it's better than a divorce and a separation, and not living together. So, you want to influence your husband or your wife and the children; there's a sanctifying effect upon them.

You know, by the way, grandparents can have a powerful, eternal effect on grandchildren - amen? - by prayers. I'm thankful I had a godly, praying grandmother. I had a godly, praying mother. I have a godly, praying wife, and sometimes I think about how blessed I am that I have actually had a lifetime surrounded by these godly women who have prayed for me, and God has used their prayers to so impact my life.

Verse 15, “But if the unbelieving depart,”—in other words, they are not pleased to dwell with you as a Christian, you are to—“let him depart.” What can you do? You can't force them. You can't coerce them. You can't pressure them. Sometimes I've counseled say a woman who became a Christian and her husband doesn't want to live with a Christian and wants to leave, and she just freaks out and goes to pieces about, “What do I do? What do I do?” You trust the Lord. You put it in God's hands. You love him. You submit to him. You pray that God will use your life to impact him, but you can't pressure, push, or coerce or force anyone to stay in a marriage. “But if the unbelieving depart, let him depart.” Then, notice what it says, “A brother or a sister”—it's speaking to the believer—“is not under bondage in such cases: but God hath called us to

peace.”

I'll just cut right to the chase. It is in my book on marriage as I cover these verses quite in depth. I personally believe, and good Christians disagree here, it's not a matter of orthodoxy, but I believe that this is a situation where if you're a Christian and you get saved and already married, and your spouse is not a Christian, and when you get saved they don't want to be married to you and they abandon you—they leave you or they divorce you—that you are free to either get a divorce if they abandon you, that you eventually can get a divorce, and where the Bible allows divorce, it allows remarriage.

I had a woman years ago that came to me in tears. She said, “Pastor Miller, my husband disappeared. He just walked out the door on my marriage fifteen years ago, and I don't know if he's dead or alive. I haven't heard from him since. I have no contact, no one knows where he is. Am I supposed to stay single the rest of my life? Am I just supposed to not get married again?” I believe that there are two biblical bases or allowances for divorce. In Matthew 17, we talked about it last Wednesday, is sexual infidelity or sexual immorality, that you have a basis for divorce and that would include remarriage. The second would be abandonment, you're being abandoned; and nine times out of ten there is divorce. I also know, as I said, I've seen people just leave and they don't get a divorce. That's a cruel thing to do. There's no finality there, just disappeared.

The question is, and I realize it's a subjective issue, the Bible doesn't spell it out, how long does one have to be gone from a marriage to consider that an abandonment? All I can say is that it's between you and God, and it's more than just 15 minutes late from going to the grocery store. “He should've been home 15 minutes ago, that heathen husband of mine! I'm going to divorce him!” No, that's not what it's about. It's about waiting, being patient, trusting the Lord. But if you are abandoned, you're forsaken, I believe that you are no longer under bondage, and that phrase “under bondage” is talking about the marriage bond, the marriage relationship; and where you are able to be free from that bondage, then you are also free to remarry. You can do your own homework on that subject, if you please.

“ . . . but God hath called us to peace. 16 For what knowest thou, O wife, whether thou shalt save thy husband? or how knowest thou, O man, whether thou shalt save thy wife?”

Now, it begins in verse 17, down to the end of the chapter, verse 40, and we have a lot of information and answers that were questions, no doubt, asked about singleness. That's another big issue in Corinth. When they got saved, not only were they wanting to forsake their heathen spouses, but many of them were feeling that it's better not to get married, it's better to be single, so Paul's writing to them saying a lot about the single life.

It is unfortunate that so much in the church we focus on marriage and encouraging marriage, and rightfully so. The Bible says, “Whoso findeth a wife findeth a good thing, and obtaineth favour of the LORD.” But there is nothing wrong, nothing evil, nothing bad, nothing intrinsically bad about singleness. It is actually described in our chapter as a gift from God and that God

may call you and gift you to singleness, and that you can use it to serve the Lord. I'm convinced that as you follow me through this chapter tonight, you'll see it clearly as well, that Paul is actually encouraging, in light of "the present distress," the single life because then you can be fully dedicated and devoted to serving the Lord. So, there's nothing bad about that.

Sometimes single folks feel like that something's wrong with them because they're not married, and that's absolutely not the case whatsoever. So, now Paul begins to address questions that were addressed to him about evidently singleness. The first thing he talks about is that God assigns us or gives to us our status—whether you're single or married. I use the word "assigned," it's the word "distributed" in verse 17, but he's basically saying if you're single when you get saved, he encourages stay single. If you're married when you get saved, stay married; so it's abide in your calling or your assignment.

Follow with me, verse 17. Paul says, "But as God hath distributed to every man,"—that's mankind or person—"as the Lord hath called"—I've underlined the word 'called'—"every one, so let him walk. And so ordain I in all churches." He opens with this statement, "But as God hath distributed," or God has placed you, or God has assigned you—you were single when you got saved, it doesn't mean you're not going to get married, maybe down the road or whenever, but don't freak out. Don't go crazy. You can be given a gift of singleness, and it's a blessed thing to serve the Lord being single, and God assigned you that so stay in the assignment that God has called you in. " . . . as the Lord hath called every one, so let him walk. And so ordain I in all churches."

Verse 18, "Is any man called being circumcised?" What he's going to do is use this analogy of if you're a Jew, don't try to be a Gentile; if you're a Gentile, don't try to be a Jew. He uses the idea of circumcision. "Is any man called being circumcised? let him not become uncircumcised"—he's just using it as an analogy. Basically, it's a fancy way of saying, if you're a Jew, you don't have to become a Gentile; if you're a Gentile, you don't have to become a Jew. " . . . let him not become uncircumcised. Is any called in uncircumcision? let him not be circumcised. 19 Circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing, but the keeping of the commandments of God,"—that's the important point, that's the important issue, that we're obeying God, keeping His commandments.

Verse 20, here it is, "Let every man abide in the same calling wherein he was called." Wherever God saved you, that's where you should abide. Verse 21, "Art thou called being a servant?"—now he switches from being Jew/Gentile to being a slave or freeman. He says, "Art thou called being a servant? care not for it: but if thou mayest be made free, use it rather. 22 For he that is called in the Lord, being a servant, is the Lord's freeman: likewise also he that is called, being free, is Christ's servant. 23 Ye are bought with a price; be not ye the servants of men. 24 Brethren,"—he's speaking to the Christians—"let every man"—or every person—"wherein he is called, therein abide with God." All of those verses I just read basically is Paul saying, "Just bloom where you're planted." Don't be freaking out, "I gotta get rid of this marriage. I gotta run from the marriage." Don't be freaking out, "I gotta get married. I gotta get married. I gotta get married," a panic attack, you know, "I gotta get married." No, you just settle in, bloom where

you're planted, grow in the Lord, focus on just being what God wants to do in your life.

Beginning in verse 25, Paul begins to break down some advantages to singleness. So, you single folk that are here tonight should be somewhat encouraged by these verses. These are some of the advantages to being single. "Now concerning virgins"—and he uses that term to describe those that are not married. It has more of the emphasis upon a woman that isn't married—"I have no commandment of the Lord: yet I give my judgment,"—again, what Paul is saying there that Jesus did not specifically give us any teaching about this situation, so he says, 'I'm speaking not of commandment of the Lord, but I give my judgment'—"as one that hath obtained mercy of the Lord to be faithful." Jesus didn't speak about this subject, but I feel that I'm faithful in addressing the issue.

Here's the first blessing or benefit, it's in light of "the present distress," verse 26. He says, "I suppose therefore that this is good for the present distress, I say, that it is good for a man so to be,"—so to be what? So to be single. He's actually saying it's good. There's nothing wrong with it. He says, "We're living in a time of distress," again, we don't know what was going on at Corinth. Most likely, it was persecution. Some of them were being put to death maybe or being imprisoned, but they were living in a very wicked, sinful culture, and there was a time of difficulty. Maybe it was a famine or some issue going on in the city of Corinth. I don't know. But take note of "the present distress," verse 26, so in light of that, it's a difficult time to be married because you have the responsibility of a wife, or of a husband, and children then come into the marriage, and you have children to take care of.

Again, that's not to say that if the economy's bad and times are rough in America, you don't get married, you don't have kids. That's a very foolish thing to do. There are people like that now, "Well, America has gotten so bad," or "The world's so bad, why would you want to bring kids into this world?" The world is going to be bad until Jesus comes, and you bring kids into the world because they can be salt and light, they can be a blessing not only to you and your spouse but to others.

Here, Paul's talking about the fact that there is a distress going on right now, and it's a difficult time to be married, so it's good to be single. He says, verse 27, "Art thou bound unto a wife? seek not to be loosed"—the same thing he just said earlier, if you're married, stay married. But then he says, "Art thou loosed from a wife? seek not a wife,"—which as a lot of young Christians have read that, it freaks them out. They think, "Wow! He's telling me I'm not supposed to be looking for a wife?" "I'm not supposed to be looking for a husband?" Again, in light of "the present distress."

Verse 28, he says, "But and if thou marry, thou hast not sinned,"—you say, 'Well, that's good to know.' If you're married tonight, you're not a sinner because you're married. He says, "and if a virgin marry, she hath not sinned. Nevertheless such shall have trouble in the flesh: but I spare you." I'll just mention it because I don't know if I'll forget it later. Marriage is not going to solve all of your problems. I was waiting for some of the married people to say, "Amen," to that. They don't want to get in trouble, right? "Well, if I only could get married, I'd be happy." I want you to

come up and talk to some married people after church. “If I can only be married, I’d have great joy. I’d find wonderful fulfillment. All my problems would be solved.” Yeah, right. It is not the cureall to all your problems.

Some people get this idea that, “If I could just get married, life would be wonderful.” You know, people who are married they wake up singing to each other every morning as the sunlight comes through the window and glistened on the eggs and bacon that his wife was...and then the bird sings in the window like he did in Julie Andrews for The Sound of Music. He’s singing in the window, and everything’s just beautiful. “If I could only get married,” no. It’s not going to be the cureall for all of your problems. Paul says, “I want to spare you,” verse 28. He says, “Nevertheless such shall have trouble in the flesh: but I spare you.”

The word “trouble” in the Greek, verse 28, literally means to press together, which is interesting, that’s what marriage is, right? God just presses us together, the two become one, and it’s a challenge—two sinners living together under the same roof. You still, even if you’re both believers, have a sinful, carnal nature that you’ve got to get the victory over. That’s why I like to emphasize in marriage the importance of Ephesians 5:18, “. . . be filled with the Spirit,”—be filled with the Holy Spirit. That’s the way to have a happy, joyful and successful marriage. But marriage is a way of being pressed together, and many times we rub each other the wrong way. It can be challenging. It can be hard. It can be difficult. So, Paul says, “I want to spare you.”

In verses 29-31 Paul says this world is also passing away and life is very short. He says, “But this I say, brethren,”—again, addressing the believer—“the time is short”—my guess is, I could be wrong, but he’s not talking so much about the prophetic calendar that Jesus is coming soon, though Paul believed that. I believe he could be talking about the brevity of life. The Bible is very clear, and the longer you live you realize how short life is. And, in light of that, let us not get bogged down with the marriage relationship or having children or raising a family. Let’s be focused on serving the Lord. Married or single, our focus and our commitment and our priority should be living for, glorifying, and serving the Lord. So, time is short.

In verse 29 Paul tells us the third reason. The first reason for singleness, present distress; reason two, problems in the flesh and marriage, you’re going to have difficulties, challenges, trying to get along together sometimes; the third is the passing of this world, time is short. He says, “. . . it remaineth, that both they that have wives”—and here’s a radical statement—“be as though they had none.” They that have wives be as though they had none? I’ll come back to that.

Verse 30, “And they that weep, as though they wept not; and they that rejoice, as though they rejoiced not; and they that buy, as though they possessed not; 31 And they that use this world, as not abusing it: for the fashion of this world passeth away. 32 But I would have you without carefulness.” That phrase “carefulness” is worrisome care, “I don’t want you to be worried, burdened, and careful.” “He that is unmarried careth for the things that belong to the Lord, how he may please the Lord,”—he talks about the preoccupation of marriage, how we can be

distracted when we are focusing on just our marriage.

Let me go back over some points. If I had a favorite section of this chapter, this is it, verses 29-35. In verse 29 he says, “. . . they that have wives be as though they had none.” Let me paraphrase in words that are as simple as I can what he’s basically saying. He’s basically saying that if you’re a married couple, and you’re both Christians, it doesn’t mean that you just, “Okay, I’m going to leave my wife,” “I’m going to leave my husband.” “I’m not going to support my wife.” “I’m not going to take care of my kids. I want to be as though I’m not married. Woo! I’m free at last. Thank God, I’m free at last!” What it means is, “. . . as though they had none,”—he goes on to say that those that are—“. . . unmarried careth for the things that belong to the Lord, how he may please the Lord.”

I believe what he’s saying is even as a married couple, covenant with one another, “. . . as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD.” Amen? That’s what he’s saying to married people. Don’t just get so caught up in buying your home and buying cars, having children, doing all the things that you do, decorating the house and working in the yard, and rushing to soccer games and doing all this stuff. All those are legit and great things, “But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.”

Have you ever noticed that maybe before you were married you were at the Bible studies all the time, you were at the church serving the Lord. Then, you get married and it’s like, “Well, let’s stay home,” or “Let’s go here,” “Let’s do this,” “Let’s do that.” You find that this focus shifts from sacrificial service and being committed to being busy for the Lord and seeking the Lord to just being all wrapped up in your family life. Now, I believe the family should be a strengthening and a blessing to the church, and I believe the church should be a blessing and a strengthening to the family. So, the family shouldn’t take away from the church, and the church shouldn’t take away from the family. They actually should be wed together. But as a husband and a wife, nothing more important than for you to say, “Let’s put Christ first. Let’s put serving Him first. Let’s put fellowship at church first. Let’s not let our own marriage get in the way.”

But be careful, you can get so busy serving the Lord that you forget you have a wife or that you forget you have a husband, and that’s a dangerous thing, too. So, keep your priorities straight, but make sure that Jesus Christ and loving Him, glorifying Him, serving Him is top priority in your life and in your marriage.

Remember the Parable of the Sower? There was that seed that was sown on the weeds, and the weeds grew up and choked out the fruit, and the weeds were “. . . the cares . . . and the deceitfulness of riches,”—of this life. Be careful that you don’t forget to “. . . seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness,”—keep it straight.

When I got married I was 25 years old and had been pastoring for five years. I had a congregation of several hundred people, and that was the priority of my life. I could study all day long. I could preach every night. I could go, go, go, go, go. I could sleep in a sleeping bag in a tent. I had a ’66 VW bus with a bed in the back. I could park anywhere in some

neighborhood street, and that's where I spent the night. I could crash there, and it was easy.

But when I got married, we had to get a house. We had to pay rent, and we had to actually buy sheets and blankets and a bed and put food in a refrigerator. I mean, when I was a bachelor, I could live on a chocolate cake donated to me for a whole week, and I tried that once. Someone baked me this big, beautiful chocolate cake, and I had it for breakfast, lunch, and dinner from Monday to Friday. Never again would I do that. Man, did that mess me up. But now that I got married, I have domestic duties and responsibilities and take care of my wife—things that I never even thought of before.

My wife has always been...I didn't know you're supposed to wash sheets. I'm still alive, but I never washed my sheets. I could wear a pair of pants for a couple of weeks, it's no big deal.

Basically, it's going to go on to say “. . . to be as though they had none,”—means that you don't get yourself distracted or bogged down by the cares of this world or the cares of this life.

Look at verse 30. The way Paul words this is amazing. “And they that weep, as though they wept not,”—don't waste time with being filled with sorrow. Don't waste time wallowing in self pity and weeping. Then, he says, “and they that rejoice, as though they rejoiced not,”—don't get too caught up in all of your pleasures and all of your joys—“as though they rejoiced not; and they that buy, as though they possessed not,”—don't put all your time, energy, and effort into possessions and buying things.

Verse 31, “And they that use this world, as not abusing it: for the fashion of this world passeth away.” I love that. The Bible says, “Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.” Don't let the world distract you. Make your priority serving the Lord. Don't be distracted by the preoccupations and the carefulness of marriage. Verses 32-35, “But I would have you without carefulness”—worrisome care—“He that is unmarried careth for the things that belong to the Lord,”—that's what it means to be married, but it's as though you're not, care for the things of the Lord, “. . . how he may please the Lord.” That should be a couple's priority and focus.

Verse 33, “But he that is married careth for the things that are of the world, how he may please his wife. 34 There is difference also between a wife and a virgin”—a single woman. “The unmarried woman careth for the things of the Lord, that she may be holy both in body and in spirit: but she that is married careth for the things of the world, how she may please her husband.” Ladies, you get married, your husband wants mashed potatoes, you've got to make mashed potatoes. I just thought I'd throw that out. You can't just go, “I'd love to cook dinner tonight, but I'm going to spend the evening seeking the Lord, praying to Jehovah God.” No, you have a husband to feed. You have a family to feed. You have things to do—domestic responsibilities. “. . . but she that is married careth for the things of the world, how she may please her husband.” He just wants you to know that.

Verse 35, “And this I speak for your own profit; not that I may cast a snare upon you, but for that

which is comely, and that ye may attend upon the Lord without distraction.” One of my many favorite Bible scholars and commentators was John R.W. Stott. It’s interesting, he never married. He felt God had called him to be single. John Wesley never married. God called him to be single. C.S. Lewis didn’t marry until he was 60 years of age, and then he lost his wife. He’s basically saying that if you are single, and there’s nothing wrong with that, you can attain the things of the Lord without distractions.

Here’s what I believe, that if you are married, that the wife can support the husband serving the Lord, ministering the things of the Lord; and likewise, the husband can encourage the wife to serve the Lord, to seek the Lord, and that you’re both more spiritual because of each other and that you’re both committed to serving the Lord together.

Beginning in verse 36, and we’ll wrap it up. He says, “But if any man think that he behaveth himself uncomely toward his virgin,”—he’s addressing a situation where he’s talking about arranged marriage and a father that is struggling with whether he should give his daughter in marriage or not. Again, the Corinthian culture was all messed up and had all kinds of perverted sexually immoral things going on. He’s wanting to address this issue that evidently some Christian fathers thought, I don’t want to let my daughter get married. It’s not good. He’s addressing this issue which there was obviously a question asked, but we don’t know what the question was. He says, “ . . . if she pass the flower of her age,”—we don’t know exactly what that would be—“and need so require, let him do what he will, he sinneth not: let them marry. 37 Nevertheless he that standeth stedfast in his heart, having no necessity, but hath power over his own will, and hath so decreed in his heart that he will keep his virgin, doeth well.” A father that does not give his daughter in marriage he says, “ . . . doeth well,” as well.

Verse 38, “So then he that giveth her in marriage doeth well; but he that giveth her not in marriage doeth better.” Again, in light of “the present distress,” in light of the wicked Corinthian culture, he’s making these statements. The Bible doesn’t say marriage is bad; it doesn’t say singleness is bad. Both are gifts from God. Whatever God calls you, that we should abide.

In closing, he says, “The wife is bound by the law as long as her husband liveth; but if her husband be dead, she is at liberty to be married to whom she will,”—don’t miss this—“only in the Lord.” She can only marry “in the Lord.” Let me say this quickly before we wrap this up. Not only do you want to marry a Christian, you want to marry a committed, strong Christian. I’ve seen so many people say, “Oh, they’re a Christian.” “How do you know?” “They told me they were.” Are you sure they have been born again? Are you sure they love Jesus? Do they read the Bible on their own? Do they go to church on their own? Are they walking with the Lord? Are they showing evidence of salvation? “Well, no. But he said he’s a Christian.” That’s dangerous. There ought not to be any doubt in your mind.

This is why I don’t think you should rush into a relationship. You should do observation first. You can learn a lot about somebody by watching them across the room, not just rushing in, “Hey! You want to go out on a date?” and getting involved with them too quickly. Take time to sit back and watch them. I don’t think you should even date anybody until you’re convinced that

it's somebody you would want to marry. Some say, "Well, if you date a whole bunch, then you know if you want to marry 'em or not," yeah, and then you're all messed up. Get to know them. Say, "That person loves Jesus. Look at the way they serve the Lord. That's a person that I could get married to." Then, you get to know each other, and then the Lord brings you together. It starts with an observation and then friendship. So, "... only in the Lord."

Verse 40, "But she is happier if she so abide, after my judgment,"—which again, Paul comes back to singleness—"and I think also that I have the Spirit of God."

These last two Wednesday nights have been a challenge to teach, so I encourage you to go back over them, read maybe a paraphrase or the New Living Translation. Meditate on them, and ask God to speak to you.

Let me wrap it up by saying a couple things about being single. First of all, focus on being, if you're single and not married, the right kind of person that a Christian or a spiritual individual would want to marry. I can't tell you how many times I've had guys, especially guys, are great for this, come to me, "Pastor Miller, I want to marry a really spiritual woman," and immediately I'm thinking, If you ever meet her, she won't marry you because you're a dodo bird. "Do you read your Bible?" "No, but I want a real spiritual woman." "Do you serve the Lord?" "No, but I want her to." She won't be attracted to you. Focus on being the kind of a person that a quality Christian would be attracted to.

Secondly, don't go looking for a spouse beating the bushes for a spouse. I say that because I believe if you find one, that person will look like they've been beat out of a bush. Let the Lord bring them to you. Just get on serving the Lord, get on living for the Lord, and let the Lord bring them to you. God has resources that you know nothing about. I've seen people church hop all over looking for a cute guy or cute girl or spiritual person, and it's always a disaster.

Thirdly, get godly counsel. Get very good, godly counsel on God's will, God's plan and purpose for your life. Fourthly, "Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths." Wait for God's timing. Not only is the person important that you marry, but the timing is also very important. Above all else, want God's will in your life, and God's glory more than anything else. Amen? Let's pray.