



Pastor Hugh Whitfield July 23, 2025 Pearl Baptist Church

The Cross and Your Marriage

1 Cor. 7:1-9

1 Cor. 7:1-9 (CSB)

Now in response to the matters you wrote about: "It is good for a man not to have sexual relations with a woman." 2 But because sexual immorality is so common, each man should have sexual relations with his own wife, and each woman should have sexual relations with her own husband. 3 A husband should fulfill his marital duty to his wife, and likewise a wife to her husband. 4 A wife does not have the right over her own body, but her husband does. In the same way, a husband does not have the right over his own body, but his wife does. 5 Do not deprive one another—except when you agree for a time, to devote yourselves to prayer. Then come together again; otherwise, Satan may tempt you because of your lack of self-control. 6 I say this as a concession, not as a command. 7 I wish that all people were as I am. But each has his own gift from God, one person has this gift, another has that.

8 I say to the unmarried and to widows: It is good for them if they remain as I am. 9 But if they do not have self-control, they should marry, since it is better to marry than to burn with desire.

A. We are here to get CrossFit.

As you know the Church of Corinth was a mess, and the only way Paul was going to get them to clean up their mess was to get them TO THE CROSS. That is, get the people in the church CrossFit.

In the last chapter (1 Cor. 6), Paul addressed sexual immorality within the church and how to make sexual immorality unthinkable.

And that is a great segway to the topic of marriage here in chapter 7.

B. God's desire is that your marriage be magnificent. In fact, most everyone starts their marriage believing it's going to be magnificent.

How many of you remember your wedding day?

ILL. PICTURE: Sept. 30, 1989, Mt. Vernon Baptist Church, Boone, NC.

I was standing at the altar. And the sanctuary was full of family & friends. Watched the processional of the bridesmaids & groomsmen. And then the double doors in

the foyer flung open, and in walked into the sanctuary the most beautiful bride on the planet. I never saw Carol more beautiful in my life.

And she met me at the altar, and we said our “I dos.” And we left the church in a ’53 Chevy on our way to having a magnificent marriage. BTW, we spent our 1st night in Winston-Salem at Brookstown Inn. And then, on to a condo at Carolina Beach.

- C. And everyone who has gotten married would have one word to describe their wedding day, the bride, and the groom – **MAGNIFICENT** or a version thereof.

And truthfully, God wants that magnificence to continue for the rest of your married life.

- D. And the good news is, it can, as long as you **build your marriage based on God’s blueprint.**

Sadly (and tragically) a lot of married people are not building their marriage on God’s blueprint – and do you know what you get when you don’t build your marriage on God’s blueprint? You get a married mess.

Your sizzle turns into fizzle.

Your happy beginning turns into a nasty ending.

What was so sweet has become so sour.

- E. That was the story of many marriages in the church of Corinth. When they got saved, they brought all their baggage about sex, marriage, divorce, and even polygamy along with them into the church, and the only blueprint for marriage they had, was what was imbedded into them through their worship of the numerous Greek gods and their government (Rome).

Example:

- (1) Most of these Corinthian Christians were slaves (don’t think 1800s) legitimately working for a master. But Rome did not permit legal marriage of slaves.

Rome only permitted masters to allow slaves to become companions – live together – and once a slave was sold, that companionship ended.

And slaves could have multiple companionships throughout their life.

- (2) For common people, Rome had a custom called Usus. If you lived with a person for 1 year, that person became your spouse; we know it today as common-law marriage.
- (3) Only the elite folk would have an official wedding ceremony and legally marry according to Rome.

And guess what was rampant? Divorce
And slaves changed partners multiple times.
And common folk got rid of one and got another.

And we have not even begun to talk about polygamy
and all the adulterous, immoral relationships that were
common in Corinth.

- F. The point is, marriage was messy in Corinth.
And because of their new-found faith in Jesus, they had
lots of questions about marriage.

Which is why Paul begins 1 Cor 7 with this word:

"Now in response to the matters you wrote about" (1 Cor. 7:1)

Prior to this letter, Paul was sent a list of questions from
these Corinthian Christians who obviously had several key
questions about marriage, divorce and re-marriage.

- G. And knowing these Corinthians were bringing so much
baggage concerning marriage, and they had no concept of
a biblical marriage, and sexual immorality was through the
roof, Paul decides not to unload the tractor-trailer on them,
but just unload a dump truck of the critical principles for
having a magnificent marriage.

In fact, Paul gives them 4 principles about having a
magnificent marriage. And ends with a 5th that's different
than the four.

So, if you want to have a magnificent marriage, every
marriage must have these 4 foundational principles:

1. Marriage is Magnificent when there's MONOGAMY

2 But because sexual immorality is so common, each man
should have sexual relations with his own wife, and each
woman should have sexual relations with her own husband.

- A. God's #1 rule for marriage is this:
1 man married to 1 woman for life.
That's God's divine design.

He never intended polygamy.
He never intended marriage to consist of multiple
wives/husbands.

His only plan is monogamy.
One husband, one wife for life.

Gen. 2:24

**²⁴ For this reason a man shall leave his father and his
mother, and be joined to his wife; and they shall become
one flesh.**

Mt. 19:6

⁶ So they are no longer two, but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let no man separate.”

- B. Jesus preached God's #1 rule for marriage to the Pharisees:
1 man married to 1 woman for life.

In other words, Jesus preached when people marry they are entering into a holy union; They are becoming no longer 2, but 1.

One in heart.

One in mind.

One in spirit.

Your thoughts, feelings, desires, plans, and purposes become closely aligned.

You share in those thoughts, feelings, and desires, and you develop a strong bond that cannot be easily broken.

- C. And at the center of your relationship is not you or your spouse, but Jesus.

JESUS is the glue that cements your marriage together.

And the Christian couple is not “in it to win it” for them, but they are “in it to win it” for HIM!

- D. And to bring anyone else into your holy union, poisons God's perfect plan and wounds your means to find total fulfillment and satisfaction in the person God gave you.

And sadly, you are always on the hunt for someone else to satisfy.

Which is why you want to first find your satisfaction in God and in the husband or wife God gave you.

- E. God knew what He was doing when He designed marriage between 1 man and 1 woman for life.

Marriage is magnificent when there's MONOGAMY.

2. Marriage is Magnificent when there's PURITY

2 But because sexual immorality is so common, each man should have sexual relations with his own wife, and each woman should have sexual relations with her own husband.

- A. “Because of immoralities” (NET) (plural)
“Because there is so much sexual immorality” (NLT)
“Because of cases of immorality” (NAS)

Sexual immorality was pervasive not just in Corinth, but sadly, in the church. And it came in all forms: prostitution, pre-marital sex, extra-marital sex, homosexuality, bestiality, pornography, polygamy.

- B. Paul was well aware that the Corinthians were involved in polygynous arrangements – men had multiple sexual partners throughout their marriage.

And Paul knew sex outside of marriage was destroying people's marriages.

- C. Which is why Paul's solution is this:

Keep your fire in the fireplace where it belongs.

If your fire gets out of the fireplace, you're going to burn down your house.

So, all your sexual fulfillment should not be outside your marriage, but within your marriage – with your wife, with your husband – and no one else. PERIOD!

- D. Paul said,

Heb. 13:4 (CSB)

⁴Marriage is to be honored by all and the marriage bed kept undefiled, because God will judge the sexually immoral and adulterers.

God takes marriage very seriously.

It's people who don't take marriage seriously.

Why does God take marriage so seriously?

Why does God want purity in our marriage?

- E. **Because marriage is picture! It's a picture of God's relationship with us.**

In your marital relationship, there should be the conduct and characteristics of God.

God loves.

God is holy.

God is full of grace and truth.

God is faithful.

God is just.

God is good.

God gives.

- F. When there is impurity within your marriage, it's not representative of God. It's representative of what? SIN And who? SATAN

You're not being God-like. You're being godless.

And that doesn't bring God's blessings.

That brings the messings.

- G. **God wants your marriage to be full of His blessings, but if you drink from the cup of impurity, your marriage will sick.**
And like the Corinthians, you'll have a marital mess.

Good news, God is willing to clean up your mess.
He's a professional at cleaning up messes.

But you have to do your part.
What's your part?

Admit it and quit it.

Admit that pornography (maybe soft porn)
Admit your flirtatious behavior
Admit your neglect
Admit your distance
Admit your lack of spiritual leadership.

1 Jn. 1:9

If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

- H. And if you admit it and quit it, watch God bring blessings to it.

Marriage is magnificent when there's PURITY

3. Marriage is Magnificent when there's INTIMACY

3 A husband should fulfill his marital duty to his wife, and likewise a wife to her husband. 4 A wife does not have the right over her own body, but her husband does. In the same way, a husband does not have the right over his own body, but his wife does.

- A. God loves SEX. He created sex. But He only loves sex in the context of marriage.

And He gave us sex for 3 purposes:

(1) **Procreation** – Gen. 1:28, “be fruitful and multiply”

(2) **Pleasure**

Prov. 5:18

Let your fountain be blessed,
and take pleasure in the wife of your youth.

(3) **Picture**

A picture of worship

- B. That's why God tells husbands to “fulfill his marital duty to his wife, and likewise a wife to her husband.”

Duty = obligation; a debt that is owed

And the obligation or debt that is owed is not to think about what you need, but what she needs (if you're the husband) and what he needs (if you're the wife).

- C. And what your spouse needs is intimacy.

ILL. Husband & wife – went to a marriage counselor
He stood up, walked over the man's wife and planted a kiss right on her lips.

And said, "she needs that twice a week."

The husband said, "I can bring her ever Tuesday and Thursday."

And here's the tough truth:

To withhold intimacy from your spouse is not just to dishonor your spouse, but disobey God.

He designed intimacy to protect you from adultery.
He designed intimacy to produce security between you and your spouse.

D. v4 A wife does not have the right over her own body, but her husband does. In the same way, a husband does not have the right over his own body, but his wife does.

Right = Paul's talking about authority

I'm glad he didn't just say the first part.

Paul would have been accused of misogyny (the hatred of women).

I'm glad he added that 2nd part.

When you marry, your body doesn't belong exclusively to you anymore. It belongs to who? Your spouse.

E. So, wife, watch out.
Husbands, take note.

You don't need permission to be intimate.

You just need to prime the pump.

Marriage is Magnificent when there's INTIMACY

4. Marriage is Magnificent when there's UNITY

5 Do not deprive one another—except when you agree for a time, to devote yourselves to prayer. Then come together again; otherwise, Satan may tempt you because of your lack of self-control. 6 I say this as a concession, not as a command.

A. "Do not deprive" = do not defraud one another.
Since intimacy is a duty/obligation, Paul's saying to withhold your duty is to rob your spouse of his or her fulfillment & enjoyment.

The only time abstinence should be practiced is when you both agree you're setting aside time to seek the will and the way of God.

It may be a season of fasting or cleansing or interceding, but Paul's counsel is to do it only for a time – a short time –

and then come together, else you may fall into the temptation of Satan.

- B. And remember, as a Christian you have a target on your back. And you are prey to the enemy.

And sexual immorality is one of the enemy's biggest weapons against followers of Jesus.

- C. And the way to stop Satan's assault is through INTIMACY with your spouse.

Marriage is Magnificent when there's UNITY

5. But there's nothing wrong with CELIBACY

1 Cor. 7:1b

"It is good for a man not to have sexual relations with a woman."

1 Cor. 7:7-9

7 I wish that all people were as I am. But each has his own gift from God, one person has this gift, another has that.

8 I say to the unmarried and to widows: It is good for them if they remain as I am. 9 But if they do not have self-control, they should marry, since it is better to marry than to burn with desire.

- A. The Corinth Christian single's ministry had a big question for Paul?

Should a person marry?

With all the mess in marriage, wouldn't it be best stay single?

And Paul answers: Yes.

Paul preferred CELIBACY over MARRIAGE

- B. And we'll address celibacy/singleness in a later message from 1 Cor. 7.

For now, know this.

If you are single or widowed (and not married), you are not a 2nd class citizen.

In fact, some people have the gift of celibacy.

God created them just that way – and as we will see, for good reason.

- C. But let me conclude with verse 9:

But if they do not have self-control, they should marry, since it is better to marry than to burn with desire.

- D. In other words, if you are going to be single and sin, better to marry.

Don't be single and sin
Don't be married and sin

That's the Word of the Lord.

Conclusion:

God wants you to have a magnificent marriage.

How?

Monogamy

Purity

Intimacy

Unity

Who wants a magnificent marriage?