

Paul's Counsel for Marrieds and Singles
1 Corinthians 7:1-16; 25-40

Some of you were reminded of your status quite well this week with Valentines Day, or “**Single Awareness Day**” as I used to call it.

I celebrated Single Awareness Day for many years myself. I don't want to return. I came home a few weeks ago, and everyone was gone. **Kimberly took the kids to VA. I returned to cold pizza. No dog. No wife. No kids. Football.** While I did have the freedom to watch my favorite Westerns, I still didn't like it. “It's not good for man to be alone.” I missed by companion.

However, as we mentioned last week both marriage and singleness are honorable in Scripture. As for marriage, the Scripture says God ordained it; and it is to be held in honor (Heb 13). But singleness is also honorable.

The Corinthian church had a misunderstanding of singleness. Some of the Corinthians exalted it too much, over against the Jewish exaltation of marriage.

The Contemporary church, while rightly valuing marriage, unfortunately denigrates singleness at times. You hear very few sermons on singleness. Ever seen a conference on it?

Others often analyze singles, theorizing about why they've had a failure to launch. Some **Churches won't hire single pastors! (I remember my first offer from a church...)**. Some singles feel like second-class citizens. They should not feel that way!

On the other hand, singles sometimes wrongly idolize marriage. Sometimes they want to postpone their lives until marriage – which may or may not be wise and good. Or, some singles can worship autonomy and independence.

Many singles fail to realize that they have a better, and permanent family in the church. “God sets the lonely in families,” and that is in

the church. However, many singles fail to see this. **Instead, they go looking for community at the club or the singles bar...** Paul gives us a compelling vision of how singleness can be used for the advancement of the kingdom of God.

We need to hear this, and also be reminded that Jesus Christ himself was single! He is the **model for singleness**, like he is the **model for marriage** (he loved his bride, the church, dying for her, nourishing and cherishing her)! As a single, Jesus had desires! He was fully human, yet without sin.

Keller speaks of this revolutionary view: “Nearly all ancient religions and cultures made an absolute value of the family and of the bearing of children... [But] Single adults cannot be seen as somehow less fully formed or realized human beings because Jesus Christ, a single man, was a perfect man. Paul’s assessment in 1 Corinthians 7 is that singleness is a good condition blessed by God, and in many circumstances, it is actually better than marriage.... [This was a] revolutionary attitude.... Single adult Christians were bearing testimony that God, not family, was their hope. God would guarantee their future, first by giving them their truest family – the church – so they never lacked for brothers and sisters, fathers and mothers, in Christ.” (195).

Do you hear that? You bear testimony that God is your hope – your joy, satisfaction and delight. You get to enjoy the family of God on a deep and profound level.

So let’s turn to this most important text on singleness and marriage and see how we might glorify God in both of these states.

1 Corinthians 7

I’ve chosen this text to continue thinking about marriage. Last week we looked at many foundational truths from Ephesians 5. This theology is found in 1 Corinthians also (notice **6:16**), and we also find some other helpful instructions for marrieds and singles.

While Ephesians gave us an exalted view of marriage, Corinthians give a more down-to-earth view of marriage and singleness. Here talks a lot about passions, and about sexual purity.

We Share A Lot in Common with the Corinthians

Confusion Over Sex

- The Corinthian church had some who were into **hedonism (ch. 5)** (pleasure-seekers), and others were into **asceticism** (pleasure-abstainers).
- One wing was really wild on issues of sex and sexuality; the other wing had a negative view of sex, promoting celibacy as the proper approach to life. (cf. 1 Timothy 4:1-4).

The Contemporary church shares these same views to a degree

- **Hedonistic** – It sounds something like this: “**All sexual expressions are valid today. If it feels right, do it.**” Consequently, alternatives to biblical marriages are accepted, and sexual sin in other ways is minimized.
- **Ascetic** – It sounds like this: “**Sex is gross. You should never talk about it.**” Many in the church today view sex as dirty, rather than a gift to be cultivated, enjoyed and celebrated.

It isn't a god (like the hedonistic make it).

It isn't gross (like the ascetics make it).

It is a gift.

1 Corinthians 6-7

His Concerns

Paul began the first part of this book by addressing his concerns first. There were different issues that he had to deal with – divisions, rivalries, his authority, lawsuits, and this matter of sexual immorality.

- A church discipline case (**5:1-12**)
- Paul mentions their past and the power of Christ to transform (**6:9-11**)

Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality, nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. **And such were some of you.** But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.

(1 Corinthians 6:9-11 ESV)

- **Paul urges them to flee immorality (6:18-20)**

Flee from sexual immorality. Every other sin a person commits is outside the body, but the sexually immoral person sins against his own body. Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body.

(1 Corinthians 6:13-20 ESV)

He is reminding them of the gospel. You have been washed! You have been bought with a price! Glorify God with your body.

Their Concerns

In chapter 7, Paul now gets to the questions of the Corinthians. “Now concerning” (cf., 8:1, 12:1; 16:1; 12). Paul begins to address some of their issues and the first topic is on sex, singleness, and marriage. So, it seems that Paul deliberately placed their concern after the flow of his concerns.

Now concerning the matters about which you wrote: “It is good for a man not to have sexual relations with a woman.” But because of the temptation to sexual immorality, each man should have his own wife and each woman her own husband.

(1 Corinthians 7:1-2 ESV)

V. 1 - Paul begins with an apparent statement floating around. The ESV places this in quotation marks. Older translations do not. That makes it seem like Paul is saying this. But this can't be true, since he will go on to say otherwise. Further, we know that Paul has an exalted view of marriage in places like Ephesians. Paul is going to

address this idea of the ascetics, those advocating celibacy as the only true, godly state.

- Some thought you *shouldn't get married* because you would have sex.
- Some were advocating *not having sex* within marriage.
- Other advocated *leaving your marriage* because of sexual relations.

Who are these people!?

Paul will go on to acknowledge that while singleness is good, he doesn't support the idea that it is more spiritual or more acceptable than marriage, nor the idea that one should avoid sexual fulfillment in marriage.

Plan. I want to speak first to the marrieds, giving two main exhortations; and then to singles, highlighting for exhortations.

FOR MARRIEDS: DO NOT DEPRIVE ONE ANOTHER (7:2-5)

V. 2 –Most have strong desires for intimacy, and therefore they should take a husband or wife (heterosexual, monogamy – one husband and one wife).

This does NOT mean this is your only motivation for marriage! Paul doesn't have such a dim view of marriage! Chances are, if you are that inflamed with sexual passion, you will struggle in marriage also.

3-4: Notice that husbands and wives submit sexually to the authority of one another. In marriage, the spouses body belongs to the other.

- Paul is not a chauvinist for he issues the same charge to both.
- He speaks of the absolute equality within marriage, which was *not* at all normal in his day.
- In Ephesians, “love your wife as your own body.” That is, care for their desires like your own. One of those desires would be sexual fulfillment.

What this Doesn't Mean:

- This is not a license for any kind of perversion within marriage. “Whatever is pure, lovely.... Think on these things” (Phil 4:8)
- This doesn't mean you should use this to dominate one another. “Come here, body!” Fee says it well, saying that he emphasis is not “You owe me” but “I owe you.”
- Though sexual intimacy is the primary issue here, this doesn't mean that mutual support and companionship are not in view. This is not just a sexual exchange. Each spouse should aim to satisfy each other – that requires, time, talking, companionship, etc.

5a: Here is the admonition – “Stop depriving one another.”

- Sexual relations between a man and a woman are commanded.
- Sexual intimacy is not an option, or a bonus.
- So here is a blessing in marriage: sexual fulfillment, and here is an obligation within marriage.

5b: Here is the exception... The couple may stop for a time of prayer. But even this is further qualified:

- **Mutual** – The couple agrees on this. “in symphony”
- **Limited time** – “limited time” “come together again.” They longer you refrain, the more opportunity you give to the Devil.
- **Purposeful** – Don't refrain because you're mad, bored, not in the mood, or whatever, but for prayer. One might extend this practically for mission trips, etc.
- **Reason** – **Satan** would love to divide and destroy by keeping a couple away from each other.
 - “Defeat Satan with Frequent Sex” is a heading in Piper's book on marriage.

Hebrews 13:4-5, "Let marriage be held in honor among all, and let the marriage bed be undefiled, for God will judge the sexually immoral and adulterous. Keep your life free from the love of money."

The writer the writer puts money and the marriage bed side by side. Counselors put these at the top of the list.

- Money and sex are spiritual warfare issues.

This is not all the Bible says about marriage, but it is important. Let me remind you of some of the reasons God ordained marriage:

- **For Partnership** – "It is not good for man to be alone." Adam had animals, but he didn't have a wife. The greatest blessing I have in marriage is companionship. "This is my lover and this is my friend" (Song of Solomon, 5:16)
 - I have a friend, and I also have a partner in ministry.
 - Prisca and Aquilla were great partners it seems
 - What is companionship? Well, what is a friend? Keller defines it well, when he says it involves "**constancy and transparency**." "A friend loves at all times" (Prov. 17:17) – constancy. He says that a friend "**always lets you in (transparency), and never lets you down (constancy)**."
 - Your spouse is not primarily a lover or a provider, but a companion. The spouse is not primarily a sexual partner or a financial partner, but something more – best friend.
- **For Procreation** – They were told to fill the earth. I'm glad so many of you have taken this seriously.
- **For Pleasure** – Marriage is a gift, and so is sex. Proverbs teaches men to find their pleasure in the wife of their youth – (See **5:18-20**). Song of Solomon speaks in vivid terms about enjoying one's husband or one's wife. "Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth! For your love is better than wine" (**Song 1:2**)
- **For A Picture** – Marriage pictures the covenant keeping love of Christ for his bride, the church. Don't ever let this truth not stun

you! **No where else in the world do people have such a view on marriage.** The point of marriage is not marriage! But Christ and his church!

- **For Purity** – One of things marriage does it that it helps one not burn with passion (**See v. 9; 7:36-37**). It is a safeguard.

How so? I'm not going to suggest a plan! I will say this, I think C.J. nails it when he says, "**Touch her mind and heart before you touch her body.**" Romance begins before 10:00pm.

How often? I'm not suggesting a plan! **Martin Luther** said, "**Twice a week provided ample protection from the Tempter.**" You guys work that out.

At this point, some married people want a copy of this message, but you singles are like "This is the worst sermon on singleness ever. This isn't helping at all!" Just hang on for a minute!

FOR MARRIEDS: STAY TOGETHER (10-16)

Now, Paul addresses the person who doesn't like marriage any more, or doesn't want to be married anymore. Or, they thought they could be more useful if not married. Paul corrects them.

Qualifier: I don't have time to get into all the issues here, if I'm going to get to singleness....

10-11: When Paul says "not I but the Lord" he refers to the fact that Jesus taught on this himself.

- Jesus quoted Gen. 1-2 in Matthew 19
- Jesus also spoke on this subject in Mark 10:11-12.

The words "separate, leave, and divorce" in verses 10-16 are used interchangeably.

Paul is stressing the ideal plan,
which husband and wife together forever.

App: The bottom line for anyone considering divorce: Don't consider it. That's what he's saying. Don't entertain it. If you find yourself in difficulty, stay in it, look to Jesus and seek renewal.

I haven't considered any exception clauses.

Jesus permitted divorce in the case of *pornei*, though he never commands it. (Matt 19)

Why did Paul not mention this exception clause in 1 Cor 7? Perhaps it's simply because of the audience being addressed in both cases. Some of the Corinthians were looking to dissolve marriages, especially issues of sexual immorality. This may have been the wrong time to address the issue.

12-16: Paul talks to those in **mixed marriages** – *not* mixed in race, but **mixed in faith**.

Some in the congregation believed that to be married to an unbeliever would defile the person. Paul says “no.”

He says that the believer must stay together with the unbeliever, and not initiate a divorce.

The unbeliever should find the believer as an example of sacrificial love. The believer needs to be careful not to lock the unbeliever out of their life. They should be loving, and patient as God was with them.

Here, Paul says “**I not the Lord**” because Jesus never spoke on this specific issue. This doesn't lessen the authority of what he's saying. He has already told us that he is an Apostle.

14: Rational. There are some overflow blessings of the unbeliever being wed to a believer – they are “made holy.” This doesn't mean marrying a believer saves them, but rather they enjoy some of the moral benefits of marrying a believer. A believing mom or dad have a sanctifying effect on the family.

14b: He says that the children are “holy.” This too doesn't mean they are believers, but that they are not defiled. Some in the congregation probably believed that if you were united to an unbeliever, your children were corrupt. Of course, all kids are corrupted by sin, but all kids are also gifts from God and must be valued and prized.

Separation

15: Here, Paul says that the unbeliever may not be able to stay because of the loyalty to Jesus in the spouse. If so, Paul says, “Let them go.” Notice, it's the unbeliever initiating it. The believer isn't to try to prevent it. Live in peace. If they decide to leave, let them do so.

I agree with Begg and others that we may argue for biblical grounds for divorce and remarriage based on sexual immorality or desertion.

A person may remarry on these conditions:

- The Spouse Dies (Rom 7)
- The Spouse Commits Sexual Immorality (Matt 19)
- The Unbelieving Spouse Leaves (7:15)

“In God's sight, the bond between a husband and wife is dissolved only by death (Rom 7:2), adultery (Matt 19:9), and an unbeliever leaving (1 Cor 7). When the bond is broken, in any of those ways, a Christian is free to marry. Throughout Scripture, whenever legitimate divorce occurs, remarriage is assumed” (MacArthur, 167). (Other proponents of this include D.A. Carson, John Feinberg, John Stott).

But the issue is: Stay Together!

16: This is not a guarantee that the unbeliever will be saved by staying together. The chances are minimal. Possible? Yes. But sometimes, constant tensions may make the matter worse.

This isn't a guilt trip to the believing spouse, saying if you don't hang in there then he will never be saved. There may be a time in which the believer lets the spouse go, in hopes that in that separation the Lord may save him or her.

FOR SINGLES: BE HOLY

(7:6-9)

6-7: We see here that marriage and singleness are gifts from God. Paul is currently single, and he is glad to be so. He wishes others were gifted like him, but recognizes not everyone is.

What is this gift? Is Paul saying that he has no sexual passions? Or, is this an act of his will? Is he saying, God has blessed me with contentment? I think it is something like that. Jesus speaks of Eunuchs who have chosen to be so for the kingdom.

I think those who are gifted in singleness still “feel the heat” but they are able to put their sin to death and focus on the kingdom, and that is a gift of God.

Thiselton writes, “**The parallel is not celibacy verses marriage, but the gift of a positive attitude which makes the most of the freedoms of celibacy without frustration.**” I think he’s probably right. I think this is a gift of contentment, not necessarily lifelong celibacy.

Plus, I think gifts change. You may be content now, but not later.

The thrust of the whole chapter is one of “remaining as you are.” There is a contentment theme running through it.

Not everyone is content, and so they need to get married. Paul says that one is not more spiritual than the other.

8: Paul speaks of the “unmarried” and “widows.” The term “unmarried” is masculine, and could be taken as a “widower” according to Blomberg. It is quite possible that Paul was a widower. His wife could have died.

- It is very likely that he was married, since Rabbis were almost always married. It would be hard to fathom that the Hebrew of Hebrews was not married. What happened to her? Either she died or left Paul after his conversion (another topic taken up in a few verses)

The ascetics could have been telling widows and widowers, not to remarry. But Paul doesn't say that.

7:39-40

Paul says that they are free to marry, "in the Lord." That is in the Lord's way, under his reign. (I think I might too have the Spirit of God! Paul's use of sarcasm. Those in Corinth thought they were know-it-alls).

So he does not prohibit remarriage. Have you ever met a widow who misses companionship and gets more and more lonely sleeping in the bed alone?

9: "Burn with passion" means "being aflame with passion." Paul did not need to add "with sexual passion" because it's understood (Garland).

Marriage is designed in part to fulfill these desires.

What is **not an option** here is this: **IMPURITY**. Marriage? Fine. Singleness? Fine. Living out your sexual passions outside of marriage – Not fine!

- If you can't exercise self-control, get married. ..
- Don't worry about spending a lot of money on a wedding! **Order Little Caesar's – Hot n' Ready!**
- Guys, I think you should take the initiative, but I think if he's being passive ladies, then follow Ruth's example! Clean up and go work in his fields!
- **Guys, Don't think this just sort of happens! You won't wake up one day, like Adam, and have a lady appear from your rib!**
- "Burn with passion" – Some claim that what Paul says here is "It is better to marry than to burn in hell." I don't take that view, but it is true that **if you don't get married, your passion for sex will lead you into sin, and if it is persistent, unrepentant sin, then possibly to hell (cf., 6:9-10).** "It's better to lose your eye, then your body burn" Jesus said.

- **God is not against sex; he is pro-marriage.** I love marriage. I love coming home. I have been on trips with dudes; it's not that great after two days.

Come to Jesus to be cleansed, changed, and empowered. Then make war on the flesh.

Paul urges the singles to pursue holiness. This takes spiritual discipline. This is a call to war. It is a call to focus on the kingdom, not with being constantly consumed with marriage.

**FOR SINGLES: BE WISE
(7:25-31, 36-38)**

In this section, Paul says that there may be seasons for singleness.

This section covers those who have never married but are of marital age. There is disagreement about how to translate "**betroted**" or "**virgins**" (also 36-38). I go with Fee and others who see this is "young betrothed women who along with their fiancés were wondering whether to go through their marriage or not. (Fee, 327).

I am just calling them singles, understanding that they are of marital age.

Present Distress

26: The big issue in verses 25-31 is the "present distress" (26). Paul mentions a season of life that might necessitate not getting married.

- Many think Paul is talking about the urgency of living in the last days in light of verses 29-31. I think he is speaking of this, but the last days began after the cross. His point is just that the day to day affairs are not eternal, not that Christ will return next week. The question is, what made him raise this issue? I think there was a specific issue or issues on his mind.
- He could be speaking of persecution.
- It could be an unnamed distress (cf., 11:30, 12:10)
- I think he's probably a famine or impending famine (and maybe the previous two). Clement speaks of "calamities,"

and Winter has shown significant historical documentation of a famine. “Winter links this verse with issues about grain supply, and the appointment of Tiberius Claudius Dinippus as curator of supplies at Corinth, as well as with attitudes toward the poor, the dispossessed, and the hungry within the church (11:21, 34). (See Thiselton).

- **Given the challenge of famine, it would be hard to put food on the table.**
- **These challenge certainly makes one long for Christ’s return.**

27: He says that those who are married, should stay married; those who are free, should stay free (27).

28: However, he says if you can’t practice self-control, get married.

28b: Just remember that you will have many worldly troubles.”

36-38: Paul says be reasonable. Paul says that in light of the present crisis, some were thinking of backing out on their engagement (perhaps of those with older virgins). Paul says one is free to do as he wishes, but he needs to consider all of the variables and be wise.

Application

Paul deals with question of **time**, “Is now the best time?”

- Is college the best time?
- Is being in debt the best time? It is not necessarily a barrier, but it’s hard.
- Do you have an addiction? If you are a porn addict, you don’t need a wife. You need Jesus.
- Are you a new Christian? Do you know what you want?
 - When I became a Christ-follower, I waited to date. I didn’t know what I wanted or needed.
- Do you trust God in your waiting? Don’t sin in your waiting. Waiting time is not wasted time.

Marriage Takes Work and a Lot of Time

- Your time changes – How many of you men, used to have a hobby? “I used be a good bass fisherman, now “I’m good at vacuuming. You should see how I empty the dishwasher.”

- Your money changes – You support a family not baseball card collection.
- Your home changes – You have a table now!
 - When I was single, I could move in two hours.
 - When I got married, we were buying stuff, like a bed and a dresser. I was like, “Why do we need that?”
 - Benjie used to keep his clothes in the bed of his truck.
- Your clothes change – Not sweats. Guys get domesticated.
- Your questions change: “How can I love and serve you?” That’s your job.
- Do you want a wife? Is now the right time?

**FOR SINGLES: BE DEVOTED
(7:32-35)**

Next, Paul highlights for us some of the blessings of singleness.

32-35: Here is a great advantage: You are freer from anxieties. Not totally free, but more free.

Paul says “the married man is worried about pleasing his wife.”

His “**interests are divided.**” Again, this isn’t a bad thing. The man is to care for his wife as Christ does the church. Paul is simply saying that the single person has some unique opportunities.

Examples: Helen Roseveare, John Stott, Charles Simeon

The greatest example was Jesus. “I must be about my Father’s business.” He was single minded.

Here are some benefits:

- More time – prayer, writing, serving.
- More mobile – Example – mission trips.
- More singular focus – Paul could write, “One thing I do” and really mean it. He was all about the mission.

- o **Schedule** - **At 4:45 I get a text almost every day. Can you get the kids?** Everyday I am working. I would work longer. I would get a whole lot more done. But my interests are divided.
- o **Traveling** – I used to travel a lot more than I do now. I turn down a lot of opportunities because of family.
- o **Global Missions** - **Missionaries in Moslem countries.** There is an advantage to being single.

Devoted to the King: Eunuchs for the Kingdom

This general thought of undivided devotion may be compared to what Jesus said in **Matthew 19**, where he responds to the disciples assertion that it's better not to marry with the caution,

“Not everyone can accept this word, but only to those to whom it has been given. For there are eunuchs who have been so from birth, and there are eunuchs who have made eunuchs of men, and there are eunuchs who have made themselves eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of heaven.

Let the one who is able to receive this, receive it.”

Matt 19:11-12

Some were without capacity for sexual relations because of a birth defect, castration, or their own choice of celibacy for the sake of the kingdom. There have been some through the ages, deny the delights of marriage for the sake of mission.

Isaiah 56:3-5

"God promises those of you who remain single in Christ blessings that are better than the blessings of marriage and children.

Someone might ask, wouldn't it be better to have both—the blessings of marriage and the blessings of heaven? There are two answers to that question. One is that you will find out someday, and better to learn it now, that **the blessings of being with Christ in heaven are so far superior to the blessings of being married and raising children that asking this question will be like asking, wouldn't it be better to have the ocean and also the thimbleful?** But that's not the answer you wanted. So here is another one: **Marriage and singleness both present us with unique trials and unique**

opportunities for our sanctification—our preparation for heaven. There will be **unique rewards for each.** Which is greater will not depend on whether you were married or single, but on how you responded to each." (Piper)

Rev 14:4-5: The seer praises celibacy, at least metaphorically, as he describes 144,000 apocalyptic, Jewish evangelists, "who follow the Lamb wherever he goes." That's what you do when you are single – Follow the crucified and risen redeemer.

Summation

If we drew up a table of what Paul is talking about it, it would be this:

1. One group is single and has no desire to get married. That is a gift, and they should serve the Lord passionately.
2. One group is married and able to express their sexual desires purely. They have many responsibilities and cares. But it's honorable and they should serve the Lord passionately.
3. One group needs to get married. The verb translated in verse 9, "they should marry" is a third personal plural imperative – "**They are to marry!**"

I told my kids this last week – what you pick at McDonalds today doesn't really matter. **But picking a spouse – that matters.**

I'd like to conclude my offering some thoughts on choosing the right spouse.

Proverbs: Choose Wisely

Proverbs speaks a lot about the need to choose your spouse wisely. Otherwise, you have a lot of grief and pain coming.

Thankfully, God can still bring grace and mercy to those who **do not choose wisely.** I think about the woman at the well (John 4), who had many problems relationally. Jesus told her about her greatest need, himself. There is grace and hope in Christ for those who have chosen

poorly. Jesus will hear your confession too, an transformation you like this lady, and allow you to drink deeply from the river of his delights – There were consequences; but she was able to move on. In fact, she became the first evangelist among her people. Why? Because “she who is forgiven much, loves much.”

The emphasis in Proverbs is to be careful how you choose the right person to marry.

An excellent wife is the crown of her husband, but she who brings shame is like rotteness in his bones.
Proverbs 12:4

“Crown” implies that the wife brings the husband *blessings*, both publicly and privately. At home, she becomes a glistening crown who welcomes people in the home where the family reflects Christ’s command and example.

Publicly, she enhances the public stature of the husband. When in public, she honors her husband through her modesty and godliness.

“rotteness to his bones” – in contrast to a crown, is the *inner ruin of a man who marries the wrong type of woman, or vice versa*.

He is ruined, privately and publicly...

At home, the wife can bring internal suffering by undermining his ability to lead, and by complaining...

A continual dripping on a rainy day and a quarrelsome wife are alike.
Proverbs 27:15

- The imagery here goes beyond a **nagging annoyance** like a **leaky faucet**; it is actually more like a **leaky roof** – which over time *threatens the whole house*.
- **Such attitudes** and problems render the house **inhospitable and intolerable...**

It is better to live in a corner of the housetop than in a house shared with a quarrelsome wife.

Proverbs 21:9

It is better to live in a desert land than with a quarrelsome and fretful woman.

Proverbs 21:19

- In short, the wrong spouse can ruin the harmony, home, and relationship all together.

Publicly, he experiences decay as well... in short, she is not a crown on his head; she is a thorn in his flesh.

So how do you find a crown and not decay?

How Do I Choose Wisely?

1. Seek Christ

Before we seek a spouse, we must first seek Jesus. Listen, a good spouse, is ultimately the gift of God....

House and wealth are inherited from fathers, but a prudent wife is from the Lord.

Proverbs 19:14

He who finds a wife finds a good thing and obtains favor from the Lord.

Proverbs 18:22

Seek Jesus; seek him personally, and prayerfully.

The best thing you can do for your spouse is to cultivate a deep relationship with Jesus. Learn how to serve Him and submit to Him.

2. Seek a Christ-Follower

Charm is deceitful, and beauty is vain, but a woman who fears the Lord is to be praised.

Proverbs 31:30

If you are a dude, this is what you need: a Proverbs 31 lady. If you are a lady, you need someone like Jesus.

Scripture is clear about marrying a believer.

Do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers. For what partnership has righteousness with lawlessness? Or what fellowship has light with darkness? What accord has Christ with Belial? Or what portion does a believer share with an unbeliever? What agreement has the temple of God with idols?
2 Corinthians 6:14-16a

Not only do we have this biblical mandate, it just makes practical sense. If you are a Christian, you will use money differently and make decisions differently.

A Christ-follower is **Regenerate** (2 Cor. 5:17)

- You don't need a rich man; no you need a regenerate man.

A Christ-follower is **Obedient**

Ladies

Can he do Ephesians 5:25-29?

1. Sacrificial Love – Is he self-less, humble
2. Sanctifying Love – Does he love Scripture?
3. Satisfying Love – Does care for others

Can he do 1 Peter 3:7?

- Will he honor you?
 - Honor you martially? Will he come home, love & serve?
 - Honor you physically? Is he purifying you now?
 - Honor you emotionally? Will he be sensitive to you, not harsh? (Col. 3:19 – “Do not be harsh with her”)
 - Honor you verbally? Will he talk to you?
 - Honor you practically? – Doe he now, hold the door, stand up when you enter the room?
 - Honor her spiritually? Does he know how you are doing?

“We’re not talking about requiring a man to be six feet tall or have a six-figure income, a college degree, or a two-car garage. We’re talking basic, biblical requirements.” (V. Baucham Jr., *What He Must Be... If He Wants to Marry My Daughter*)

Men

Is she a Proverbs 31 type of lady? A 1 Peter 3:3-6 lady?

In Proverbs 31, A mother to her son...10-31 is an acrostic poem in Hebrew, each verse with a letter in the Alphabet

- She’s rare (10)
- She’s trustworthy (11)
- She does him good (12)
- She works (13)
- She prepares food (14-15)
- She’s financially savvy (16)
- She’s creative (19)
- She’s merciful (20)
- She’s fearless (21)
- She honors her husband (23)
- She’s wise (26)
- She’s not idle (27)
- She’s honored by her children (28)
- She fears the Lord (30)
- She is praised by her works, not own words (31)

Gentlemen, you are looking for this lady; not a Barbie doll.

1 Peter 3:1-7 – godliness, gentle and quiet spirit and modesty.

“Adorning” – save it for home. Some ladies wonder why they attract the wrong guy; **it’s because they have the wrong wardrobe.** You’ve got the wrong wardrobe because they’ve got the wrong Lord. **Let your godliness be the attraction.**

3. Seek Comprehensive Attraction

21

**I don't know how else to say this, but you need a companion first.
But you need a companion that you are attracted to.**

Most people go into rooms, and size up the ten singles, and pick the three that are most attractive.

You need to remember that marriage was first about companionship in the garden.

You are simply seeking a sexual partner, or a financial partner, but a companion for life.

Beauty is fleeting. If you choose only physical attraction (guy problem) or financial security (lady problem), then you are headed in the wrong direction.

Some dudes are just too picky. They're like, "I want one who can go snorkeling or rock climbing..." When you have four kids and two jobs, you are not worried about rock climbing.

Men, Find someone who can be your friend, and a good mother.

4. Seek Counsel

*Without counsel plans fail, but with many advisers they succeed.
15:22*

- **During romantic relationships, you are tempted to look through rose-colored glasses.**
- **You are tempted to drift into idolatry; and obsession.**
- **You are tempted to be driven to physical intimacy more than anything.**
- **You need good counseling. Ask your community group, leaders, and wise trusted Christian friends.**

Conclusion

The question for all of us, are we devoted to the Lord - in our current state?

The good news of the gospel is that he was devoted to us when we were unfaithful to him.

Now, "we are his," because of his grace, and "he is ours."

Because of the new life he has given us, we have power to be devoted to him.

As we come to the table we should also be reminded that marriage is a temporary blessing of this age. In the age to come, marriage will not exist (Matt 22:23-39). But we have a family that will exist forever - the church. Let us give thanks to Christ for His great salvation, and for this great family that we are privileged to belong to.