

Guides for Godliness

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- [0 : 0 0] All right, we are in 1 Corinthians chapter 7, and we're going to do the whole chapter. It's 40 verses, and we're not going to start off by reading the whole thing first. We're going to get to reading the whole thing here in a little bit. We're going to kind of take it a little bit out of order, but before we get started, I want to cover two important ideas up front as we're going into this chapter.
- I want you to notice the first thing is in verse 1, it says these words. It says, now concerning the matters about which you wrote, matters about which you wrote.
- Up until this point, Paul's been talking to them and saying, it's been reported. It's been reported. He's heard news about the Corinthians from other people, and he's been addressing that news.
- Now, in this letter, he's shifting to questions that they've asked Paul. They sent him a letter. They're struggling with things.
- [1 : 0 9] They're trying to understand things. They've got different ideas and belief systems, and so they're writing him. As a matter of fact, if you walk through the rest of the letter, you will see places where he will repeat this phrase and say, now concerning spiritual gifts, now concerning this, now concerning.
- And so what you see is that the rest of the letter is pretty much him addressing their concerns, their questions. With that, this particular instance, he tells us full out.
- Now concerning about the matters that you wrote, it is good for a man not to have sexual relations with a woman. That phrase is their question.
- That is the theological thought that they're struggling with. And the reason they're struggling with it is because of the mixing of the gospel with Gnosticism.
- Now, we've talked about this before. We've talked about this with the book of Colossians. We've talked about this with the book of Galatians. And it's because Gnosticism was a problem for the early church.
- [2 : 2 2] It wasn't full-blown Gnosticism, but it was the beginning stages of this thing. And really, the primary thing to keep in mind about Gnosticism is the duality between spirit and matter, between the spirit world and the material world.
- For a Gnostic, spirit world is good, material world is evil, right? So you are both body and spirit.
- Your spirit's good. Your body is evil. So a Gnostic might tend to go one or the other direction. They might say, since my body is evil, it doesn't matter what I do with my body.
- That's chapter six, right? In chapter six, they had people who were going to visit the temple prostitutes. Because it doesn't matter what you do with your body. Just go do what you want to, kind of a thing.
- The other thing that some Gnostics did is that they would say, the body is evil, so beat it into submission. Treat it roughly.

[3 : 33] Deal with it. You know, so you're talking about things like fasting. You're talking about things like this phrase. It is good for a man not to have sexual relations with a woman. Well, that depends, right?

There's a way in which that's correct, and there's a way in which that's incorrect. And so those two things then make up what's going to happen as we're dealing with this particular chapter.

And really, there is a third issue related to that one, and that is that what's going on is there's some men and women in this church who, because they think that they're more spiritual than everybody else, they've got the gift of tongues, that's their problem, that because they think they're more spiritual than everyone else, they've got better fathers in the faith than Paul.

They think that because the body is evil, they're trying to divorce their spouses and get away from anything related to the physical intimacy of marriage so that they can purify themselves and be ready for this end times, right?

And so many scholars will call these people eschatological women or eschatological men, and eschatological is from eschatology.

[4 : 55] Eschatology is the study of end times or the consummation of the kingdom. It's just a fancy word to mean that they thought that they had arrived at the end of time to the consummation of all things, right?

So as Paul then comes to deal with this particular issue, and they've asked this question, he's basically laying out some guidelines for godliness.

And some of the ones that I'm picking are looking at the way he's writing and not the content of what he's writing. And here's what I mean. The first guideline is that godliness depends on your commitment to the authority of the word.

Godliness depends upon your commitment to the authority of the word. In this chapter, unlike so many other chapters, Paul has this recurring theme that he talks about all the way through the chapter.

And when you look at what he talks about, it's easy to draw an inference from all of these statements. Now let's just pause and talk about what is an inference. An inference is a conclusion, right?

[6 : 08] So I'll give you an example. I'm a freshman in high school, and my brother's a senior in high school. My brother is dating Cynthia. Cynthia's friend, Tanya, was in several of my classes because we were in the same grade.

And she finds out that my brother is Travis. And she says, You are Travis Owens' brother? And I said, Yes. She said, Wow. Like, y'all don't look anything alike.

I was like, Oh, yeah, that's true. She says, He's just so good looking. Now, very naturally, you laughed at the inference of those two statements.

I didn't tell you the inference. I just told you two truths, and in your mind, you drew the inference. Because that's what we naturally do. We take truths, and we draw conclusions.

So, here are all the statements, and the truths that Paul says, and we want to draw an inference from it. Okay? And it's in seven different places where he says, like in verse 6, Now, as a concession, not a command, I say this.

[7 : 26] Okay? So, he's telling them what he thinks they should do. Verse 10, To the married, I give this charge. But then he says, Not I, but the Lord.

Now, the reason he says that is because he's talking about what Jesus taught when Jesus was with his disciples, and we have a record of what Jesus taught.

Right? So, this is what the Lord said. So, I'm giving you this charge. Even though it's from the Lord, I'm taking what the Lord said, and I'm giving you this charge. This is what you ought to do. Verse 12, To the rest, I say, not the Lord.

And in this particular instance, it's something Jesus did not explicitly teach on, but Paul is saying, Listen, I have some truth on this that you need to hear.

To the rest, I say this. Then, in verse 17, he comes at verse 17. At the end of verse 17, he says, This is my rule in all the churches.

[8 : 24] In other words, this is what I'm teaching in all the churches. This is what you need to be doing. And you're not any different from any of the other churches. Verse 25, he says, Now, concerning the betrothed, I have no command from the Lord.

Okay? So, there's no, nothing written, no, no teaching that's been passed down from Jesus. Then he says, But I give my judgment as one who by the Lord's mercy is trustworthy.

So now, not only is he saying, I'm giving you a judgment, I'm speaking about this, this is what you need to listen to, but now he's even claiming, I'm trustworthy. And so you need to listen to me.

And then in verse 35, he says, I say this for your benefit. Right? I'm not laying any restraint upon you, but this is, I'm saying this for your benefit.

So you need to listen to me. You need to listen to what I'm saying. And verse 40, he says, Yet in my judgment, okay, my judgment, this is what I'm thinking about these things, she's happier if she remains as she is, and I think that I too have the Spirit of God.

[9 : 33] So there he's even claiming that all that he's been saying has been given to him by inspiration of the Spirit. So this is unusual. Paul doesn't talk this way in almost any other chapter in all of his writings.

But what he's doing is he's laying out the authority that they need to listen to. I say this, I say this, the Lord and I, we both say this, I charge you, you need to listen to me, this is my judgment, I'm trustworthy, I have the Spirit of God.

All of that adds up to this inference. Paul is the authority of God because God is using him because he's written it out, right? Now I think that's pretty easy to see, but we need to just talk about what that means then for a second because what he's basically saying is that as Christians, if you want to be godly and fight against the depravity that's in here, you need to be committed to the authority of God's word.

And this is really a difference between Christians and non-Christians. Christians, as a Christian, we are self-consciously placing ourselves under the authority of the scriptures.

When we start asking questions about how did life begin, we are self-consciously running to the scriptures to look for the answer.

[10 : 59] When we start talking about what is marriage, why should marriage exist, who can get married, we self-consciously place ourselves under the authority of the word.

When we ask questions about parenting, when we ask questions about money, when we ask questions about sin, when we ask questions about salvation, when we ask questions about heaven, we are self-consciously running to the scriptures, being under the authority of the scriptures and letting the scriptures tell us about reality.

A non-Christian does not put themselves under the authority of the word. They have an authority and that authority might be a scientist, that authority might be a different religion, that authority might be their own desires and cravings, but everybody has an authority that they submit to.

Many people submit to an authority without even being conscious of it, without even realizing it, but as Christians, what makes us different is that we're self-consciously placing ourselves under the authority of God's word.

You know, in Romans, it says that if we confess that Jesus is Lord and believe in our heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved, right?

[12 : 23] That's the old kind of Roman road. Well, to confess that Jesus is Lord is to confess that he's your authority, not just simply that that's just his identity.

identity. I'm saying, no, he's my Lord. And so, as a Christian then, we want to be people who are committed to the word of God, and the reason is because it is the word of God that remodels our lives.

When you remodel a home, what you're going to find is that you go in, and particularly some homes, they're just in a complete mess.

Even homes that look nice on the outside, if you start digging into the walls, you find other things. We used to have a phrase when we were remodeling the house in Port Lavaca, if you give a pig a pancake.

There's an old children's book called If You Give a Pig a Pancake, he's going to want to put some syrup on it. And if he puts some syrup on it, he's going to get sticky, and if he gets sticky, he's going to want a bath.

[13 : 32] And if he takes a bath, he wants to have a rubber ducky. And if he has a rubber ducky, it's going to remind him of the farm, and he's going to want to go visit the farm. And if he goes to the farm, he's going to get dirty, and he's going to have to have a bath again.

And so one thing leads to the next is the idea, right? So when you remodel, that's what happens. If you open up a wall, you're going to find a problem. You're going to find a problem with the electric.

And if you begin to work on the electric problem, you're going to find that there's further problems down the line. God's word, as it remodels us, exposes all of those things in us, and then it equips us to be the way we ought to be.

And so one of the things we can do to make sure that we're getting and living under the authority of God's word is to let the word of God do its exposing and equipping in our lives so that we can have our lives remodeled after Christ.

And the best way to do that is to read the word of God. Read it. Listen to the Bible studies. Listen to the preaching of the word. And let me just talk about reading for just a second because I want to hit a particular aspect.

[14 : 52] When you read the Bible, you really ought to read it a book at a time, not just all over the place. You know, there's a lot of, when I was growing up, we had these little devotions called Encounter.

And when you would open it up, there was a scripture at the top. It was usually one verse. And this scripture today was different from yesterday and it'll be different from the next week. It wasn't straight through a book.

I'm convinced that you need to read the Bible book by book and stick with a book until you feel like you understand it better and read it in thought chunks.

A thought chunk is something that begins and ends a section, right? Like, for instance, in the book of Genesis, you've got the story of Abraham that starts about chapter 12 and ends somewhere around 20-something because it picks up with Isaac.

And so, that big old thought chunk inside of it has different scenes that happen in Abraham's life. Don't just pick one verse out of a scene, but read the whole scene.

[16 : 00] Understand that whole scene as you go. And so, anyway, my goal is just to say we need to live under the authority of God's Word. Reading it is the best way for us to do so.

And as we do so, it will expose and equip our lives to remodel us like Christ. So, that's the first thing. It's just kind of a big picture idea here out of chapter 7.

How many questions about that before I move on to the second one? And I need some water. Clear as mud? Clear as mud? All right.

The second guideline, I guess you could say, is that godliness does not depend upon your life situation. Now, Paul talks about this in the middle of chapter 7.

He states the principle of this in three places in chapter 7. And we're looking at basically verses 17 through 24. And we'll read the whole thing eventually.

[17 : 09] But look at verse 17. He says, only let each person lead the life that the Lord has assigned to him and to which God has called him. This is my rule in all the churches.

And so, he says that as he's coming out of a section talking about whether or not a Christian should stay with a non-Christian in a marriage.

And he begins to talk about divorce in that situation. And so, part of the issue is that you think you can live a more godly life if you could change your marriage situation.

Paul is saying, no, you can't. And then he says in verse 20, he says, each one should remain in the condition in which he was called. And then verse 24, so brothers, in whatever condition each was called, there let him remain with God.

The point is is that your life situation does not increase or decrease your godliness. Nor is your life situation the deciding factor about how much you can grow in godliness and how faithful you can be to the Lord.

[18 : 25] It is not the deciding factor. That's his principle here. Now, he illustrates it in verse 18 and 19 with circumcision. He says, was anyone at the time of his call already circumcised?

Let him not seek to remove the marks of circumcision. Was anyone at the time of his call uncircumcised? Let him not seek circumcision.

For neither circumcision counts for anything nor uncircumcision, but keeping the commandments of God. So, in other words, he's just using circumcision to say here, listen, whatever life situation you had when you were called, keep that because your life situation is not the deciding factor about your godliness.

He uses another illustration and this one is about slavery. Verse 21, he says, were you a bondservant when called? Do not be concerned about it.

But if you can gain your freedom, avail yourself of the opportunity. Now, I'll come back to that in just a second. Verse 22, he says, for he who called you in the Lord as a bondservant is a freed man of the Lord.

[19 : 37] Likewise, he who was free when called is a bondservant of Christ. You were bought with a price. Do not become bondservants of men. Basically, the idea is that if you were a slave when you became a Christian, you do not need to be set free from slavery to be a good godly Christian.

Now, that's where this really comes home because we often think to ourselves that if we could change our life situation that our godliness might increase. Now, Paul is not against changing your life situation.

Part of what's going on in this whole chapter is somebody who's single who needs to really get married. Somebody who's married who their unbelieving spouse wants to leave them and Paul's going like, that's fine.

So, your life situation can change. Even the slave, he tells him, if you can avail yourself of the opportunity to no longer be a slave, then do it. But what he's not saying is the changing of your life situation will help you be a better Christian because it's just not true.

You do not need your life situation to change in order to be a better Christian. And what he's doing in this chapter is he's applying that truth to marriage.

[20 : 59] He's applying that truth to marriage. And so, if you go back to thinking about the remodeling of the house, if you walk into a particular room and you can tell the foundation is sinking kind of in the middle just a little bit and there's holes in the sheet rock and there's a really bad smell and the first thing you do is walk in and get the paint sprayer and paint the walls a new color, you've really not dealt with the problem.

You're just covering it over. And I think that oftentimes the life situations that we're in, we think that if that could change, then I will be a better Christian.

I will be able to be more godly, I will be able to be more faithful if I could just get this part changed. These people in Corinth, they're thinking that if I could just get rid of this man that I'm married to, then I can really soar as a super Christian.

If I could just get rid of this woman that I'm married to, then I could soar as a super Christian. And that may not be the thoughts that we think. We could be thinking about things about like if our parents had done a better job teaching us growing up, or if I had maybe had better intellectual powers to be able to understand difficult truths that I could have been a better Christian.

Or we could be thinking about our relationships. It could be that if I just had a different husband, or if I just had a different wife, or if I had different children, if I had had children who were easier to raise, then maybe I could be a better Christian.

[22 : 42] Or maybe it's the church situation. You know, if I could be in a church with a better pastor who didn't talk so much, right? Or if I could be in a church with a group of people that loved me more, you know?

Or if I had a different job. If I had a different job and I could have better hours or I made more money or made less money or I had different kind of work. Or if I just wasn't sick.

If I didn't have the health problems that I have, then I could be a better Christian. The point of the matter is that we, nothing in our life situation is the key to growing spiritually.

It's about our commitment to the Word of God. God. And you can be a slave and be a wonderful, great, godly Christian and grow in that and never leave slavery.

And so the situation we find ourselves in is not the key to spiritual growth. Now we're not talking about life situations that are sinful situations, right?

[23 : 53] You know, if you're, if somebody's living in an affair, that's not a life situation that you can stay in, that sin has to stop. That's not what we're really talking about. What we're talking about is the idea of thinking that that life situation needs to change in order for me to grow spiritually.

This really gets down to, last night as we were going through this, David made the remark that this really gets down to contentment. That we're not content with our particular life situation and because we're not content, we're not growing.

And the reason we're not growing is because of our discontentment. And that we need to understand what godly contentment is in the situation and the life situation that we're in so that that's no longer a hindrance to our walk with the Lord.

And so I just encourage them to think about three things that I think can help you grow. If you'll think about these three things, it's know God better, walk by the Spirit, and talk about Jesus.

So you need to know God better if you're going to grow in your faith. And knowing God better is all about understanding who he is, what he's done, all the aspects of his character.

[25 : 14] And you can actually in your life look back and say, I know God better today than I did six months ago. So not only is it a pathway for you to think about, because you know, just think about this, what is it that you don't know about God?

Well, run to the Word and let's go find something about God that you don't know and study it some more, right? But you can also use that to test and measure yourself and look back over six months and say, do I know God better today than I did six months ago?

Do I understand more of his love for me than I did six months ago? Walk by the Spirit is the idea of living the Christian life, both the disciplines of the Christian life, the tasks of the Christian life, as well as the attitude and the heart of the Christian life.

You know, it's things like the fruit of the Spirit. You know, one of the fruits of the Spirit, love, joy, peace, patience. As we understand what it is to walk by the Spirit and we look at the fruit of the Spirit and we say, listen, I'm not a very patient person.

Well, that's a place to grow, right? That's a place you can identify and you can say, I need to grow in patience. But you can also look back six months and say, have I grown in patience in the last six months?

[26 : 30] Right? And the final thing is to talk about Jesus and that's where we're sharing our faith with people, that's where we're discipling others and maybe we don't know how to use the Bible to help people solve life's problems, so that's an area you can go learn in.

You can say, I need to learn this. And then you can look back six months and say, you know what, I've actually had gospel conversations with more people in the last six months than I did the last six years.

That's a great way to measure your own spiritual growth. Does that make sense? I'm just trying to give you something that gives you a place to grow but also a way to measure. Since your life situation is not the key, learning in these ways would be.

And so our godliness then is not dependent upon our life situation. So that's the first two things. Those are big ideas. Now we're going to read chapter seven because the last thing, and there's a mistake, there's a typo on the list.

The list actually says godliness and practically illustrated in relationships. Should say godliness practically illustrated in relationships.

[27 : 40] So just scratch out that first N. My apologies for leaving that N. Basically this chapter breaks down into four big truths that he tells them.

These are things they need to live out when it comes to relationships. The first one is basically verses one through five. I think that's also a typo on your paper. The next one is six through nine and also twenty five through forty.

The next one is going to be verses ten and eleven and the last one is twelve through sixteen. And so you see I think you've got written down there what I have in mind.

So the first one is about having sex and marriage. And listen to what God's word says. Beginning in verse one he says, Now concerning the matters about which you wrote it is good for a man not to have sexual relations with a woman.

So there's the aesthetic, right? There's the person beating the body, trying to keep the body from doing anything. And Paul's going to disagree with that. He says, But because of the temptation to sexual immorality, each man should have his own wife and each woman her own husband.

[28 : 50] The husband should give to his wife her conjugal rights. Likewise, the wife to her husband. For the wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does.

And I'm going to pause right there and tell you that the culture around us knows that phrase, criticizes the church because of that phrase, but they don't read the second part.

The second part is, Likewise, the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does. Do not deprive one another, except perhaps by agreement for a limited time, that you may devote yourselves to prayer and then come together again so that Satan may not tempt you because of your lack of self-control.

Sex and marriage is supposed to be the norm. And it is supposed to be that the husband and wife are to look to one another in order to try to serve one another, in order to help one another.

Because the whole goal here is to avoid temptation. The man is going to have certain temptations, the wife will have certain temptations. And there's no way to lay out specifics here because every couple is different.

[30 : 16] Every woman is different, every man is different. So a couple has to talk together and say, what are the things that she needs in order to not feel tempted to stray in her mind or heart away from her marriage?

He needs to be able to say, here are the things that I need in order to not stray in my heart and my mind from our marriage. This is what we're to do for one another.

And it is all about, my approach to this has to be all about serving my wife. It cannot be about serving myself. I must look to what her needs are.

And they're going to be different. Those needs are going to be different and we have to adjust and be ready for that. But the goal is for that marriage to honor the Lord by keeping both together.

And there ought to be times given over to prayer in marriage and that is not a time for us to be pursuing these things.

[31 : 20] So there's the first one, have sex in marriage. The second one is if single again, if single again, stay that way if you can. If single again, stay that way if you can.

Now listen to the beginning of verse 6. He says, now as a concession, not a command, I say this. I wish that all were as myself, but each has his own gift from God, one of one kind and one of another.

Now when Paul says, I wish that you were as myself, he's going to tell us in just a second that he's single. It's possible that he's divorced. And the only reason I say that is because being a Pharisee meant most of the time that you were married.

So if he is a Pharisee, then he's probably divorced and he's single again. Okay? Verse 8. To the unmarried and the widows, I say it is good for them to remain single as I am.

But if they cannot exercise self-control, they should marry. For it is better to marry than to burn with passion. Now, we'll stop there because he's going to move on to talking to a different group in verse 8.

[32 : 42] But he's basically saying, he's not laying a command that you must stay single. But he's saying, if you can, if you are not driven by the sexual desire and that is not a thing that you need and you can stay single, then do so.

But if you can't, get married. It's not wrong to get married. As a matter of fact, we're going to go down to verse 25 through 40 because there he talks about people who are single who haven't been married yet.

And some of what he says there is going to help us with this as well. So look at verse 25. He says, now concerning the betrothed. Okay, let's just pause and talk about betrothed.

The word can mean virgin. The idea is that this is a fiancée. Okay? This is a fiancée. This is an engagement. Now, in this culture, it may even be that this is pre-fiancée level and could be promised level.

You know, some people do this whole thing where they give each other promise rings and it's not really engagement, but it's kind of that way. This could even be in that realm. The idea is that there's an expectation that they're going to be getting married maybe sometime soon.

[33 : 57] He says, now concerning the betrothed, I have no command from the Lord, but I give my judgment as one who by the Lord's mercy is trustworthy. I think that in view of the present distress, it is good for a person to remain as he is.

And now this is our principle he's going to come back to, right? Stay in the life situation. Are you bound to a wife? Do not seek to be free. Are you free from a wife? Do not seek a wife.

But if you do marry, you have not sinned. And if a betrothed woman marries, she has not sinned. Yet those who marry will have worldly troubles.

And I would spare you that. This is what I mean, brothers. The appointed time has grown very short. From now on, let those who have wives live as though they had none, and those who mourn as though they were not mourning, and those who rejoice as though they were not rejoicing, and those who buy as though they had no goods, and those who deal with the world as though they had no dealings with it.

For the present form of this world is passing away. Now that whole section there is all about living with the end of the world in mind.

[35 : 15] Right? That the end is coming. That's his point there. Now verse 32. Actually, Michelle, can you read verse 32 through 40?

My throat is... That heretical translation? Yeah. Yeah, you can read it out of that. I may stop you to make a few comments, but...

[illegible]

In other words, the time spent caring for a wife, the time spent caring for a husband, needs to be shifted to serving the Lord. Now, he's not saying that you must do that. He just thinks that's better, because you can devote yourself to the Lord fully. But he also understands human nature, that we wish to be close to someone, that we wish to have physical intimacy with other people, even if it's just a holding of a hand, right? He understands human nature. So he says, if that's what you want, that's fine. You just need to understand what you're getting into. You're not going to have as much time to serve the Lord, because you must care for your wife. You must care for your husband. And that's all he's saying, okay? All right, let's keep reading.

If any man thinks he's acting improperly for the person who is engaged to, he or she is getting beyond the usual age of men, and he feels he could have made it, he can do what he wants. He is not sinning, they can't get married. But he who stands firm in his heart, who is under no compulsion, but has control of his own will, and has decided in his heart that he who marries his fiancée will be well. So then, he who marries his fiancée does well, but he who does not marry will be better. Her wife is bound for as long as her husband is living. But if her husband does, she is free to be married to anyone she wants, only in the world. But she is happier if she remains that she is, and not him. And I think that I also find a spirit of God.

[38 : 30] Okay. And so he just wraps this up, just really, he's really going overboard to help us understand that either situation, either choice you make is fine, right? He, neither one is a sin. He thinks one is better than the other, and under the authority of God's Word, then we have to say he's right. One is better than the other, under the authority of God's Word, considering the current distress. The problem for us is that we tend in our culture to think, at least maybe the culture, I don't know about today's culture, but maybe about 10, 15 years ago, we live in a culture that says singleness is a bad thing.

But it's not a bad thing. Singleness is not bad at all. There is a gift of singleness by being able to allow you to have time to focus in on the Lord. Now, one of the things that comes up is that most people, as we are talking about these kinds of things, they look to the garden, they look to Adam and Eve, and they say that it was not good for man to be alone. And so they say, oh, no, no, no, singleness is not good. I mean, we should be married instead. Well, I want you to think about that, because the passage that that comes from in Genesis chapter 2, it doesn't say it is not good for man to be lonely. It says it's not good for man to be alone.

And right after that, he brings all of the animals before him coming in pairs and notices and names them all. But he says there was no helper found for Adam. In other words, he brought the animals for Adam to recognize that none of these animals are his partner, and he's without a partner.

And the goal or the command that God had given Adam was to be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth. In other words, have children. So he's saying it's not good for man to be alone because man by himself is insufficient to have children. And so the reason that he gave Eve to Adam was to fill up the lack and the insufficiency that he had because the goal was to fill the earth with the glory of God.

What do you mean? Right. I get what you're saying. Here's the difference. When God is talking about Adam not being alone, he's talking about Adam before the fall. Okay. And so before the fall, the goal was going to be that these two would procreate and fill the earth with image bearers who were not fallen, and it would have filled the earth with image bearers. Now they fell, and that changed everything.

[41 : 43] Because now even in their own household, they have children, but one of them turns away from the Lord. Right. Cain walks away from the Lord, kills his brother Abel. So they have to have another offspring.

And what you have is you have now houses, now just having children cannot fill the earth with the glory of God. But instead, now we must do evangelism and missions, and we have to do it in our own homes.

And so even a single person can fill the earth with the glory of God because a single person can actually maybe fill the earth with the glory of God more so because now they can go without husband or wife and go into the mission field and serve the Lord. Does that make sense? So you're right.

It does seem that way, but I think the fall is what changes things, if that makes sense. Does that explain everything? Okay. But you know, even with all of that, Paul is not saying that marriage is a bad thing because when you get to the book of Ephesians, he tells us that marriage is this image of Christ and the church. And so the primary purpose of marriage is for God to be glorified. Our culture has turned marriage into the primary objective of marriage is personal happiness and not being alone.

I don't know if you know what a rim joist is, but when you build a house, you have floor joists and they're all standing like this. And if you don't do anything else, but just have floor joists, the problem is, is that if the wind blows and things shift, these things have a tendency to start to lean over like this and the house will shift and fall down. So what you do is you put what's called a rim joist on these joists. And it's a, it's a board that goes this way perpendicular and you nail it on.

[43 : 42] And that keeps all of these straight and that's its primary purpose, but it has a secondary purpose. And that is that because you do this and close all this off, it keeps the animals and critters from crawling up in there too. Marriage is primarily about the display of God's glory and filling the earth with the glory of God in a couple committing themselves to evangelism in their home.

But it has a secondary purpose too, and that is personal happiness. And that is the fulfillment of an intimate relationship. So I'm not saying that that's wrong. I'm just saying that it's gotten out of order, if that makes sense. So all of that to say, singleness is a good thing. Marriage is a good thing. And that's where Paul kind of leaves us, right? He thinks it's better to be, to be single because you can devote yourself to the Lord. Okay. Well, we just have two more. These two will go a lot faster because that is kind of a big, that's kind of a big deal. He says in verse 10 and 11, basically don't seek divorce, right? To the married, I give this charge, not I, but the Lord.

The wife should not separate from her husband, but as she does, she should remain unmarried or else be reconciled her husband and the husband should not divorce his wife. Now there's more that could be said about divorce from Jesus in Matthew 19 and the other passages in the gospels. Basically what you have here in, in the Corinthian church is they're getting divorced for not a biblical reason.

Okay. And he's saying, listen, don't do that. If you're going to divorce for not a biblical reason, then either stay unmarried or go be reconciled to your husband and go back to him.

When you go to Jesus's teaching in Matthew 19, he gives an exception for divorce because otherwise there's to be no divorce, right? He gives two exceptions. One is in Matthew where if a spouse commits adultery, has an affair, the other spouse has the option for seeking a divorce. They're not required to seek a divorce. They can stay with the adulterer if they wish to. And in many cases, there've been many marriages that they have, and they have succeeded and gone on to be okay.

[46 : 15] And so, but he is giving that. But in that case, if a woman divorces her husband, who's been having an affair, she's not to be reconciled to him and she can get remarried after that because it was a biblical grounds for divorce. That's as much as he says about divorce. Then he moves to talking about a different kind of divorce in verses 12 through 16. And that's the idea of staying with an unbelieving spouse, if you can. He says, to the rest, I say, not the Lord, that if any brother has a wife who's an unbeliever and she consents to live with him, he should not divorce.

If any woman has a husband who's an unbeliever and he consents to live with her, she should not divorce him. For the unbelieving husband is made holy because of his wife, and the unbelieving wife is made holy because of her husband. Otherwise, your children would be unclean, but as it is, they are holy. But if the unbelieving partner separates, let it be so. In such cases, the brother or sister is not enslaved. God has called you to peace. For how do you know, wife, whether you will save your husband?

Or how do you know, husband, whether you will save your wife? So here, it's the very real possibility of a couple who were both lost, not Christians, and one of them gets saved. The other one is not a Christian.

In the Corinthian church, man, they're just going like, done with you, and we're just walking away because I'm a Christian, you're not, so we're not going to be together anymore. But if that unbelieving spouse, this is what Paul is saying, if that unbelieving spouse wishes to stay with you, then stay with him. Stay with her. Don't divorce. Now, if the unbelieving spouse says, I don't want anything to do with you anymore, then the Christian is free to let them go, and this is what we would call abandonment, and it's another biblical grounds for divorce. If the unbelieving spouse says, I don't want anything to do with this, then the one who is left, the Christian, can remarry after that because this person has walked away from them. And the whole reason that Paul says to stay with the unbelieving spouse is for the purpose of evangelism and missions.

When he talks about them being holy and unclean, he's not trying to use terminology that would make us say that when an unbelieving spouse marries a believing spouse, they get saved. That's not the point. It's that they're set aside for a purpose. You've married, you're married to a Christian now.

[49 : 09] That might mean that God has designed for this Christian to share the gospel with you. We have friends, Mike and Debbie Davis, and godly, godly couple, lovely, lovely couple. They were at our church, our last church, and they were both not saved. They were both lost when they got married.

And after so many years, Debbie became a Christian. Mike had a terrible drinking problem, and they were having all kinds of marital issues. And as a Christian, she was getting counsel from different women, and they would take her to different passages like 1 Peter and some other places. And she understood the word, and she began to try to live out the word. And he didn't want a divorce, and he wasn't mean to her. He was just unpleasant to be around. And so she just stuck with it, and she just stayed with him, and stayed with him, and stayed with him. And through her witness, and through her submitting to her husband and living in this way, he eventually became a Christian, gave up the alcohol the whole nine yards. And today, if you were to go talk to them, I mean, like he just exudes the Lord.

Now, that's not a guarantee, right? That's not what we're saying. We're not saying that it's guaranteed that if a Christian woman stays with her unbelieving spouse, that eventually he will become a Christian. It's saying that he might be. He might become a Christian. And the goal would be, I want to be a missionary here in my own home to my spouse, to my children. And if I were to walk away from this, then I'm walking away from the privilege of being able to take the gospel to my children and my spouse. That's really what Paul is after here. And, you know, obviously, you're married to an unbeliever. You don't want to be a jerk and make them want to leave you. You know, that's not the right thing either. And so, so let me, let me wrap this up this way. With all of these things that we've just talked about, in many cases, you might find yourself saying like, man, so much of this teaching is good, but this was not for me. Like, this is not where I am in my life. And I would say, yeah, you're probably right. There's a lot about this that's not really about and not applicable to me. There's some things applicable, but not everything.

And, but here's the point of this. This is about, one, that godliness and living in a holy way, growing in our faith. It's about the rubber meeting the road kind of things. It's in relationships, in marriage, right? And you have children and grandchildren and great-grandchildren who are going to be living and going through these things. For you to understand and know this, and for you to be submitted to the authority of God's word and say, well, this is right. Maybe I don't understand everything here, but Lord, whatever you say is right. This gives you that biblical wisdom so that when they come and they ask, or when they say that this is going on and they don't know what to do, you now have a place to turn to and say, let me show you what God's word says. This is a place to turn to turn to them. And so, so we use this just to equip ourselves to be ready to give people the wisdom that is needed. And it's just really interesting to see how God has designed marriage and these things. So, all right. Any questions or thoughts?

John's stepsister married an unbeliever. They went to church. They, I mean, he submitted to her, and after 50 some odd years, he came to church. That was a long time.

[53 : 19] That's a long time to persevere. Yeah. Yeah. We have another story. Debbie's sister has a similar situation, although her husband, as far as I know, is still not a Christian. He was pretty opposed to Christianity. He was more of an atheistic mindset and a very smart guy. One of these guys that, you know, feels like nothing's proven to him. And, you know, this is just all a bunch of stuff, but, you know, he didn't have any trouble with her going to church, but she, she often would, would make sure to do what she could. She would invite him, but he would never would come, never would come. And right before we left, probably about two or three years before we left, she was diagnosed with pancreatic cancer. And because of all the treatments and everything, she couldn't come to service. And because of COVID, we started live streaming. So she watched the services from home and she said, would you watch with me? And he did. And he watched every Sunday with her. And even once we moved and she's, she's, she passed away before we moved. But even since we've been here every now and then, he turns on the live stream here and he watches the live stream here.

Um, I look at that and I think to myself in God's providence, here came COVID and here came cancer. And those two tools God used in her life for her to be able to get her husband to sit and listen to the gospel.

Um, in that same church, another guy was married to a woman. They'd been married for probably 10 years. And, uh, she was a very obviously an unbeliever. And she, she was like, I'm, I'm done with you. I'm walking away.

And she left. And so he was like, what do I do? And I said, well, you, you let her go. That's what she wants to do. You let her go. Um, so yeah, they don't always work out, but it's really, it's really amazing to see God's hand working in so many lives.

I thought about that too, where we were going to go to, and how it was, it's not just in a life situation, but there are life situations that yeah. Yeah. It's, it's really how you handle those life situations and your attitude. And I'm not saying life situations don't make it more difficult. They certainly do. But I feel like that I've spent my life sitting on the front steps with Craig, my, my best friend at 12 going like, life will really be better when I can get my license. Life will really be better when I can graduate from high school. I'll really, you know, and I've said these things even in my Christian life going like, if only this circumstance would arise, then I will really be able to live the Christian life the way I ought to live. And, uh, that's just not true. So.

[56 : 30] So.