

## Do You Allow Different Points of Views?

Is grace your approach when others see verses different than you do? As we continue our study in I Corinthians 7, you may encounter a fresh way to look at things. These newsletters are designed to encourage objective study. Our prayer is that you remain open, taking heed to what God is teaching, being led through verses by the Spirit.

Recall that the Scripture is to be the only authority for what is believed and how one lives: *"...Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind...For whether we live, we live unto the Lord: and whether we die, we die unto the Lord: whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord's."* (Romans 14:5,8)

So then, we're all to be confident, and walk by faith, trusting as God teaches. Minding these things can become a rule to guide us. *"Nevertheless, whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing."* (Philippians 3:16) We are NOT to walk by what 'others' say or another's conviction. Stand fast!

We are to live by 'our' convictions. Yet in grace, we can allow others to come to different conclusions as they study the Word. We're able, not only agree to disagree, but be secure enough in our faith to be open to learn, proving everything by the Word. So, if there are things in our articles that are new to you, pray to stay open. Study it out.

*"Prove all things; hold fast that which is good."* (I Thessalonians 5:21)

# Just A Minute! With Scripture

The King James Bible is used for all references. Verses may be made bold for emphasis.

## I Corinthians 7: Paul Addresses Relationship Questions

**Note: This edition examines the issues of marriage & divorce.**

I Corinthians 7:1 relays that its purpose is to address questions Corinth sent about relationships, *"Now concerning the things whereof ye wrote unto me..."* Paul's teaching is arranged by topical situations, addressed one at a time. Consider the organizational breakdown. Keep instructions distinct:

Verses 1-5: Paul responds to relationship questions using grace

Verses 6-9: Unto the unmarried and widows

Verses 10-11: Unto the married: a command to both believers

Verses 12-17: Unto the married: one being an unbeliever

Verses 18-24: Contentment in your calling

Verses 25-28: Unto virgins and those loosed from a spouse

Verses 29-35: Without carefulness, serving without distraction

Verses 36-40: Given in marriage or remaining single

In Verse 10-11, Paul advises saints as a command of the Lord. In the other teachings, he uses his judgment based on the doctrine he received, guiding them to operate in grace. (Vs. 6,12, 25) This provides a pattern: Saints can also walk by faith, accessing wisdom they have learned to apply grace in various situations. (God isn't ordering every step, as under the Law.)

## Having Prepared Soil In Your Heart

How we take in Scripture determines its effectiveness. Have you read the parable of the sower lately? Though written to Israel to prepare them for the earthly kingdom, it's a great picture of common challenges when reading the Word.

**To Do:** Read the accounts in Matthew 13, Mark 4, Luke 8 for yourself. Be open to see what it can teach you about the importance of your response to sound doctrine in the Word.

Those who prepare themselves, having good ground for the seed of the Word to grow, *"...heareth the word, and understandeth it; which also beareth fruit..."* (Matt. 13:23)

Distractions will be ever with us while on earth, but God's Word works mightily within as we respond by faith. Read it daily, even when it's not convenient. If something that is read or heard seems different or doesn't fit with what you think to be true, take the opportunity to prove it by Scripture, being open. **Consider these things as we address divorce.**

## Introduction: I Corinthians And Divorce

What if someone was persuaded by the Word that he was able to split up and is now legally divorced, even remarried? Views can change. Applying grace in all we think and do is important. According to Romans 14:4-12, God desires that we live by our current convictions in the Word. We do not need to put ourselves or allow others to put us 'under the law.' When we stand before the Lord, all will be perfectly sorted out. Paul's instruction: "...*Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind...But why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? for we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ.*" (Rom. 14:5,10) It's not our job to criticize, even our own selves. (I Cor. 4:3) Thus, we can let go of the past to be mindful of our current decisions. "*I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.*" (Phil. 3:14)

There is controversy regarding what I Corinthians 7 teaches about divorce. As relayed earlier, each reader is encouraged to consider the topic afresh, putting aside emotions and 'what you always thought or believed.' Many conclude that divorce for two believers who are married is not preferred, but is acceptable as we are under grace and it is not sin. This is the general conclusion, it seems, in many Christian circles. Use care in this perspective, considering verses such as Romans 6:1-2: "...*Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound. God Forbid...*" We are called to walk by faith, "...*for whatsoever is not of faith is sin.*" (Rom. 14:23) Upon examination of Scripture, this writer has come to a different conclusion, but first, let's examine God's view of marriage.

## Marriage: What the Old Testament and the Gospels Teach

Understanding 'the marriage law' can help students in their study of I Corinthians 7. This law has been in place since Genesis, before the Mosaic Law, when God first designed marriage. "*Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh.*" (Gen. 2:24) God sees them as one, once they're joined by God in marriage.

In Mark 10:2-12, the Pharisees asked Jesus: "...*Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife? tempting him.*" Jesus responded, "*What therefore God hath joined together, **let not man put asunder.***" Under the law, Moses added a clause that one could 'put away his wife.' Here was the reason: "*And Jesus answered and said unto them, For the hardness of your heart he wrote you this precept.*" Jesus teaches further about His design: "*But **from the beginning of the creation God made them male and female. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and cleave to his wife; And they twain shall be one flesh: so then they are no more twain, but one flesh.***" (Gen. 2:24) Simply put, man is not to 'put asunder' what God hath joined.

Christ has a final word on the issue in Mark for consideration: "*And he said unto them, Whosoever shall put away his wife, and marry another, committeth adultery against her. And if a woman shall put away her husband, and be married to another, she committeth adultery.*" It is noted that Matthew 19:9 adds a phrase: "*And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery...*" Thus, fornication, that is, sexual interaction outside of marriage, was the only reason 'under the law' to put away a spouse.

**So, consider the issue:** Is divorce a faith response today? Even under the law, for those functioning with a hardened heart, divorce was forbidden, except for fornication. Consider that saints in the Body are under grace, have the Spirit within, and are given the completed Word. As a result, are we enabled to do all things? (Phil. 4:13,19)

## Taking a Candid Look at I Corinthians 7 And Divorce

Paul addresses believers who are married in I Corinthians 7:10-11. This 'command' was written to the Body of Christ and Paul relayed that it was 'of the Lord:' *"And unto the married I command, yet not I, but the Lord..."* The instruction: *"...Let not the wife depart from her husband: But and if she depart, let her remain unmarried, or be reconciled to her husband: and let not the husband put away his wife."* The charge is concluded, and the instruction is complete regarding 'believing couples.'



Paul then changes the topic to address the next situation: a saint married to an unbeliever. (Keep verse topics clear and separate when studying to avoid confusing instructions meant for a different group.) Notice verse context and that 'to the rest' Paul uses his grace judgment. (Verses 12-16) *"But to the rest speak I, not the Lord: If any brother hath a wife that believeth not, and **she be pleased to dwell with him**, let him not put her away. And the woman which hath an husband that believeth not, and if **he be pleased to dwell with her**, let her not leave him."* The saint is to remain in the marriage and is enabled/sustained when the unbelieving spouse is 'pleased' to stay: *"...My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness..."* (II Cor. 12:9) The unbeliever's desire to stay is the determining factor. The believer is to remain in the marriage for the children and perhaps the unbeliever may be saved, through the witness of the believing spouse. (Vs. 14,16)

If the unbeliever doesn't want to stay, the saint is NOT under bondage. In other words, he's not 'under the Genesis 2 law of marriage.' The reason is that God desires saints to be in peace: *"But if the **unbelieving depart**, let him depart, A brother or a sister is **not under bondage in such cases: but God hath called us to peace.**"* (Vs. 15) This seems to be the only place in Paul's epistles where divorce, that is, being loosed from a living spouse, is an option. This believer is now considered 'loosed.' Verse 16 completes the instruction for this group. (Pause here to think on these verses.)

Some saints jump into another section of I Corinthians 7 to validate divorce for two believers, like instructions within Section 25-28. However, God has already addressed and settled the discussion on the issue of divorce for two believers: they are 'commanded' to *"...remain unmarried or be reconciled..."* (Vs 11) In Verses 25-28, Paul is addressing a new group, virgins and those 'legally loosed from the law.' Let us examine definitions: **Virgins:** Those who have never been married. **Loosed:** Individuals no longer under the bondage of the marriage law: Widows (Vs 39) or 'the loosed' brother or sister in Verse 15. Paul states that it's not a sin for these to remarry. (Vs 28) Otherwise, the general principle (restated in Vs 39) applies: *"The wife is bound by the law as long as her husband liveth; but if her husband be dead, she is at liberty to be married to who she will; only in the Lord. But she is happier if she so abide, after my judgment: and I think also that I have the Spirit of God."*

Remaining 'unmarried' or reconciling to a spouse with whom there are problems is clearly a hard saying and can be difficult to bear. Yet God is powerfully able to help. Is His grace really sufficient? Yes it is! Christ in us helps us to live out these challenges. *"For unto you it is given in the behalf of*

*Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake."* (Phil. 1:29)



To conclude, as you mature, you may realize mistakes were made in the past. Keep in mind that you're under grace, there is no condemnation. Our view of others making these challenging decisions is also to be grace. We are all to live by our convictions at any given moment. It is a walk of faith. *"For he that in these things serveth Christ is acceptable to God, and approved of men."* (Romans 14:18)

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To:

**“Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus...” (Romans 3:24)**

**Personal Insights**  
**Practical Ideas on How to Study: Part II**

These five important issues about our approach to Scripture help us to grow and mature as God desires. Take a few moments to consider them:

- 1) Our Apostle:** Students need to rightly divide the Word to realize that Paul is our designated Apostle. This teaches us where to focus our study. (II Tim. 2:15)
- 2) Order:** God’s Word has a particular order to it for our growth. Read and study it realizing that each book has been placed there for a purpose. We learn as we proceed, one concept building upon the last, one chapter upon another, book by book. (Is. 28:10)
- 3) Relationship:** God always desired that man function with Him in an intimate, spiritual adult relationship. Scripture labels it as growing up to be sons, laboring together, living and manifesting Christ the Word in the decisions/activities of life. (II Cor. 6:16-18)
- 4) Led by the Spirit:** We can yield and be ‘led by the Spirit’ through His Word, taking heed to build the doctrine properly to be edified. (Rom.8:14, I Cor. 3:9-15)
- 5) God bought us with a price:** Our physical body and spirit are not ours. We can use these resources to please God. When we apply what we learn, maturity takes place. Mistakes will happen, but they become further opportunities to learn and grow. God provided the Body of Christ with a connectedness for support, but also as a ministry. (I Cor. 6:20, Rom. 12)

Read all of Paul’s epistles, but start with Romans as it renews the mind to teach us about our new identity in Christ. As we grow and are led by the Spirit, we can meditate upon what God is intimately teaching. Then, the Spirit, by

**(Applying Pauline Truth)**  
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the Word, dwells in us so we’re able to put to death the vile deeds of the body. *“But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you.” (Rom. 8:11)* As the Word feels at home, living & functioning within, the Spirit enables us to live our resurrection life.

**\*This is a continuing series on ‘How To Study’ to assist those who may have questions or are new to the reading-studying process and encourage personal study.**