

## Just A Minute! *With Scripture*

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

### Relationships ... Relationships

Theme: Application of I Corinthians 7

Knowing what it takes to maintain a good relationship between a man and woman, before and within marriage, can be a challenging issue. The Corinthians relayed their questions to Paul: *"Now concerning the things whereof ye wrote unto me..."* (Vs. 1). Therefore, Paul provides instruction for various situations: singles, widows, married, and those separated. Notice that issues of fidelity (loyalty/faithfulness) and living in charity seem to be themes in *I Cor. 7*. Two illustrations:

**Example 1:** Singles are instructed to refrain from physical intimacy until marriage: *"...It is good for a man not to touch a woman. Nevertheless, to avoid fornication, let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband."* (Vs 1-2) Maintaining personal boundaries is wise for both saints. It shows love and respect toward one another, while obeying and exalting God above their fleshly feelings.

**Example 2:** Verses 14-16 teach that a believer is to stay with his unsaved spouse. Why? There's hope that the spouse may trust Christ, but it's also good for the kids: *"For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband: else were your children unclean; but now are they holy...For what knowest thou, O wife, whether thou shalt save thy husband? or how knowest thou, O man, whether thou shalt save thy wife?"*

**How is this relevant?** Today, we are to use this chapter as a grace guideline for personal relationship decisions, while we *"...attend upon the Lord without distraction."* (vs. 35) We can prefer others or have fleshly thinking. Living contrary to the Word will reap the fruits of the flesh (*Gal. 5:19-21*). Besides not pleasing God, it can produce many unforeseen consequences i.e. unplanned pregnancy or can show a fleshly, self-centered attitude toward an unsaved spouse.

Yet, if we walk by faith in these situations, we will reap godliness: *"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law."* (*Gal. 5:22-23*) Many blessings can result as we allow the Holy Spirit to lead (*Rom. 8:14*). It can foster trust in a premarital relationship, affecting the future marriage. Also, a saint can mature in applying love and grace as he shows patience with his unsaved spouse.

## It is Too Hard ... It is Not Fair!

Paul relays a grace command to us on God's behalf (*I Cor. 7:10-22*). It is a charge that a believing couple is to stay together, until death parts them, noted in verse 39. The woman is not to leave and the husband is not to separate from (put away) his wife. *"And unto the married I command, yet not I, but the Lord, 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."*

Paul recognizes that split-ups (separations) can happen so he provides us with God's directive on the matter. Those separated are to *"...remain unmarried or be reconciled..."* unto their spouse. When saints decide to marry in the Lord, it is a vow or commitment unto God. They are acknowledging and then, agreeing that they will be joined by God to their partner, making them one: *"Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh. (Genesis 2:24)*

Many say, "Having to stay unmarried is just too hard and is not fair. My spouse was in the wrong and why should I have to suffer for it and remain unmarried?" So many issues in chapter 7 are tough to do. They are against our flesh and societal norms. (Since the 1960's, this writer observed Satan's continual attack on marriage. Before that, sex out of marriage and divorce were rarely even talked about, let alone done. Could it be true what I heard a few years ago? A new norm is 30 sex partners by age 30?)

Man's way is contrary to what God teaches; intimacy is to be a blessing only in marriage. The Genesis law of marriage expected this oneness would last till death do you part. *"What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder."* (*Mark 10:9*) Society has attacked God's boundaries & ways; we see the result in today's world. (Cont. on p. 2)

## It is Too Hard ... It is Not Fair! (Continued)

For example, premarital sex, homosexuality, and gender confusion are distortions of God's Truth. Worldly views ought not infect our thinking on relationships. God's ways are much higher than ours, and always meant for our good, even when hard to do. In love, we can forgive our spouse for wrongs, & prepare ourselves to be reconciled. It is an opportunity to live by the power of God's grace.

It feels unbearable because we forget that we are NOT expected to do it in our own effort and ability, but as *Philippians 4:13* states, it is to be done through Christ's strength. God provides all we need: *"But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus."* (*Phil. 4:19*) When we walk by faith and manifest patient endurance, others see Christ in us and God is exalted.

Grace is our exceeding power. It enables us to live out the Truth of what Paul is teaching in this chapter and push through fleshly feelings like, "It is too hard! It is not fair!" *I Cor. 12:9* says, *"And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me."* So then, by faith we can live chapter 7 instructions, but it is only possible by God's amazing grace working in us!

## Grace Teaches Us to Make Wise Decisions

As we purpose to make wise, godly decisions in our day-to-day living, the issue of grace is important. Grace is the message Christ taught to Paul and are teachings laid forth in Romans thru Philemon. If God's grace is sufficient for us to deal with the challenges of life as Paul relays (*II Cor. 12:9*), we all would be wise to understand how to live it in real situations. As we read Paul's teachings and observe how he applies it, we can learn that grace living is yielding and trusting Him. A few **examples**:

**1) II Corinthians 12:8-10:** Paul is our Apostle and in his early ministry had done many miracles, yet he was also a man with a grievous thorn in the flesh. God chose NOT to miraculously remove it to teach him to be our example for this dispensation of grace. He told Paul that His grace teachings would be sufficient to deal with anything: *"...My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness..."* Actually, God's power rested upon Paul as he trusted in God's doctrine and walked by faith. Grace taught Paul many things, as it can us, enabling him to endure this and any suffering. It worked together with the Truth for Paul's good (*Romans 8:28*).

**2) Philippians 1:12-26:** While in prison, Paul remained faithful, allowing the grace teaching to continue to motivate him to 'fight the good fight, finish his course, and keep the faith' (*II Tim 4:7*) He was not deterred by his bonds, fully continuing his ministry: *"But I would ye should understand, brethren, that the things which happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel; So that my bonds in Christ are manifest in all the palace, and in all other places."* He stays focused, enabling him to be a good witness to others and write many epistles from prison, which became inspired Scripture (Prison epistles: *Eph., Phil., Col., Phile., II Tim.*).

**3) II Timothy 4:16-18:** Paul had great responsibilities as the Apostle of the Gentiles. While trying to preach the gospel in godly love to save unbelievers and to also edify the saints, he was chased, beaten, often harassed, experienced calamity all around, and oftentimes, was all alone. Yet his comfort was in God, and through the grace message given unto him by the revelations of Christ: *"At my first answer no man stood with me, but all men forsook me... Notwithstanding the Lord stood with me, and strengtheneth me; that by me the preaching might be fully known, and that all the Gentiles might hear..."* Paul learned to focus on the wisdom and power of sound doctrine, and apply the power of grace in the challenges of life, even when he despaired of life itself (*II Cor. 1:8*).

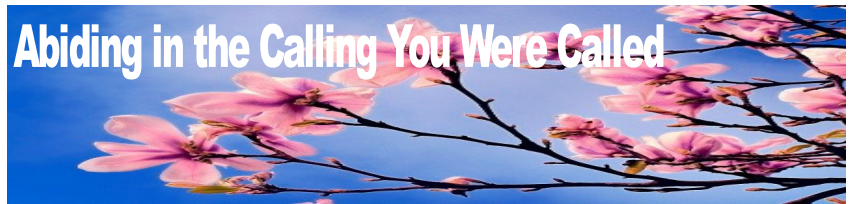
**Application:** Grace is our power, containing the very instructions and 'how to' that we need to walk by faith to please the Lord. It's not a quick fix, but takes time to understand, trust, and be fully persuaded to consistently apply. We're to learn from our mistakes, make adjustments, and listen to, & be led by the Spirit through the Word. Thus, our thinking changes and others needs are exalted in love.



In *1 Corinthians 7* Paul goes through all the different man-woman relationships and talks about marriage, divorce, and sex. We know from *verse 2* that believers are to 'avoid fornication.' Fornication is a man having sex with an unmarried woman. So we can conclude that sex is only to be between a married man and woman.

*Chapter 7:8,9* reads: "I say therefore to the unmarried and widows, It is good for them if they abide even as I, but if they cannot contain let them marry: for it is better to marry than to burn." The context implies that he is talking about widows and widowers, meaning the woman and the man whose spouse has died. Paul says the unmarried and the widow, the word unmarried is in the masculine so it is referring to a man. Because Paul addresses divorce and singles in other parts of the chapter, here I think he is referring to widows and widowers. People who have been previously married. People who have previously known the pleasures of a sexual relationship. I don't think Paul is referring here to never married singles.

In *Song of Solomon 2:7* it says, "I charge you, O ye daughters of Jerusalem...that ye stir not up, nor awake my love, till he please." and this verse is repeated again in *3:5*. When something is repeated it is important. This is telling the young lover not to awaken passion until the right time. What is the right time? When you are married. To stir up passion and have no outlet for it is to burn. So for the widow and widower who have already awakened the passions of a sexual relationship, let them marry if they cannot remain celibate.



In *1 Corinthians 7:17-24*, Paul relays an important instruction: "Brethren, let every man, wherein he is called, therein abide with God." (*vs 24*) To abide means to live and continue in the state we are in. So often, we find ourselves in situations where we want more or something different than what we already have. It's the old expression, 'the grass is always greener on the other side.' This attitude is actually called coveting.

In the context of relationships, Paul desires for us to rest and be thankful for the situation in which we find ourselves (*1 Thess. 5:18*), and not focus on the problems, negatives, or what we don't have. So then, if we are in a hard marriage, we are not to seek a divorce, but learn to trust God. If we are 'loosed' (set free) from an unbelieving spouse, don't seek remarriage (*vs. 27*). Paul's judgment: "But as God hath distributed to every man, as the Lord hath called every one, so let him walk. And so ordain I in all churches." (*vs. 17*) Obviously, no situation is perfect. Yet, we can be patient, knowing that it takes time, love-grace, and a renewed mind to mature in our thinking to accept a person or life circumstance.

In *Philippians 4:11* we can see that even our Apostle Paul had to learn to be content in situations: It took time to be able to be abased and abound: that is, being full or hungry and to abound or suffer need: "Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have **learned**, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content."

**Think on this:** When we consciously remain thankful and "...attend upon the Lord without distraction" (*vs. 35*), there is little time and energy to focus on what we don't have. As one meditates on *Verse 20*, "Let every man abide in the same calling wherein he was called," we realize it can apply to many situations, not just in relationships. We can learn to be content, whether we are circumcised or uncircumcised (*vs. 18-19*), a servant or a freeman (*vs. 21-22*), or bound or loosed (*vs. 27*). It can also teach us acceptance and joy in the job we've taken, the Church we attend, our financial situation, and even this present political/governmental environment. Yielding and trusting God to endure circumstances develops peace, enabling us to learn to trust God's grace: His power & wisdom that He has placed in us.

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To:

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

## For The Student: Study Questions to Prompt Application

**\*Use these questions to help your study of *I Corinthians*:**

**Chapter 1:** Do I trust & live by the world’s wisdom and power, or God’s?

**Chapter 2:** As I grow spiritually, is it impacting my attitudes and behavior? Am I purposing to be led by the Spirit as I walk through my day?

**Chapter 3:** Where am I in my growth? Does my life, thoughts, and decisions reflect the doctrine I have learned or is it just head knowledge?

**Chapter 4:** Am I self-exalted in my own mind, looking down on God’s work in others (as Corinth did to Paul) to justify myself? Am I following the doctrine Paul laid out and applying it in the details of my life?

**Chapter 5:** Are there ungodly influences in my life? How am I dealing with these influences? What changes are needed and am I willing?

**Chapter 6:** Do I seek secular help, support, and ways to handle life?

**Chapter 7:** Is Paul’s doctrine my guideline in relationships and my life?

**Chapter 8:** Do I exalt myself above those who are weak or see things differently than I do? How can I minister charity and grace to them?

**Chapter 9:** Can I become a servant to all and become whatever they need me to be to encourage their growth and faith in our Lord Jesus?

**Chapter 10:** What is idolatry and do I exalt myself or things above God?

**Chapter 11:** Do I respect the ‘hierarchy of authority’ listed in Verse 3? What is my attitude when I come together with the saints?

**Chapter 12:** The Lord is the head of the Body and we are His members. How can I treat my fellow saints in the same love as I treat my own body when I see a spiritual, emotional or physical need?

**Chapter 13:** Do I have any relationships that reflects godly charity? Can I purpose to allow Christ’s love to grow in just one of my relationships?

**Chapter 14:** How can I seek to ‘excel’ in edifying the Church, the Body of Christ: in my manner, communication, support, or in other ways?

**Chapter 15:** Is Christ’s resurrection real to me? Do I really believe He rose from the dead and sits at the right hand of God? If I honestly don’t, can I really believe in the Rapture and that I will resurrect?

**Chapter 16:** What does it look like to ‘stand fast in the faith,’ ‘quit you like men,’ ‘be strong,’ and ‘let all things be done with charity?’ How can I grow in these areas? What does ‘addicted to the ministry’ mean?

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