

Study 10. 1 Cor 7:1-16

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Big idea: Jesus transformed marriage.

Intro ice-breaker question

What type of husband do you think Paul would have made? [I have suggested this question because I think we can often read Paul's teaching on sex and marriage with pre-conceived ideas about Paul]

Note Paul now moves from responding to things he has heard about the church in Corinth to things they have asked him.

Neither this passage, nor 1 Corinthians contains all Paul's teaching on marriage.

Observation and interpretation

1. Read 7:1. If you are using different translations, what variations can you see?

Some say 'don't touch' others 'don't have sexual relations', others 'don't marry'. 'Touch' here is a Greek euphemism for sexual gratification. It probably refers to sex for the reason of one's own pleasure or passion, but does not include procreation.

2. Read the rest of the passage. How does the teaching in 6:12-20 impact the teaching in this passage?

If sex was only permitted within marriage, there would be no outlet outside marriage for sexual expression, and there would be a much greater focus on the sexual relations between a husband and his wife.

3. In verse 3, what does it say and what does it not say?

Husbands and wives are to give not demand!

4. How radical is verse 4?!!

This represents an unprecedented restriction on a husband's sexual freedom.

5. How might the apparent circularity in verse 4 be resolved?

For example: prayer and discussion.

6. What are the implications of verse 5 for conversation between a husband and wife?

Yes! They have to talk with each other. And they may be expected to pray together. They are 'one' not only when joined in sex, but one body loving and serving God.

7. Do you think Paul has a general preference between marriage and singleness?
8. How does Paul's teaching on divorce fit with Jesus' teaching on divorce?

See Matt 19:9, Mark 10:2-12, Luke 16:18. For further reference see this article by Mike Paget <http://matthiasmedia.com/briefing/2012/01/the-good-news-of-divorce/>

9. What do you think Paul means by an unbelieving partner being made holy by the believing partner?

Application / Implications

10. Do you think Paul's reference to prayer exhausts the circumstances when couple may abstain from sex?
11. How often should married people have sex? How might they know?

Prayer and discussion.

12. Do you think a fear of lack of self-control is a good reason to marry? What do your answers to this question say of contemporary views on the choice of marriage partner and the purposes of marriage?
13. Do we ever accept the sexual sins of Christians because we don't really take sin seriously?
14. What view of God's plan for sex and marriage do you take away from this passage?

Please do not miss the mutuality in much of this passage. And note that Paul does not have a low view of sex. He does not think it makes us impure.

Prayer ideas

15. For our own marriages [if any is married]

16. For the marriages of all at Barneys and known to us.
17. For God's view of marriage to be attractive beyond Christian circles.
18. For divorced people to feel welcome at Barneys.
19. For singleness to be honoured by us as it is by God.