

**18<sup>th</sup> September 2019.**

## **ADDRESSING MARRIAGE ISSUES. II**

### **I Corinthians 7:25 – 40.**

As had been introduced last week, this being a section in which the Apostle Paul labored to address the first of questions that had been sent him from the Corinthians which concerned marriage, of which in the first part we studied of his counsel to the first two groups he addressed; Christians married to Christians and then Christians married to Non-Christians. Tonight we'll consider the third group he addressed;

**2. *Unmarried Christians*** , which is probably the majority of our attendance tonight..... Reading I Cor. 7:25-40.....

Paul had already addressed a brief word to this group in verses 8-9, but in this closing section of the chapter, he went into greater detail. Their question probably was, "Must a Christian get married? What about the unmarried women in the church who are not getting any younger?" (see vs 36) Perhaps Paul addressed this section primarily to the parents of marriageable girls. Since Jesus did not give any special teaching on this topic, Paul gave his counsel as one taught of the Lord. He asked them to consider several factors when they made their decision about marriage.

First, consider the present circumstances vss 25-31....

It was a time of distress (vs 26) when society was going through change (vs31). There was not much time left for serving the Lord (vs 29). It is possible that there were political and economic pressures in Corinth about which we have no information. In view of the difficulties, it would be better for a person to be unmarried. However, this did not mean that married people should seek a divorce (vs 27). Paul's counsel was to the unmarried.

This did not mean that nobody should get married; but those who do marry must be ready to accept the trials that will accompany it ( vs 28). In fact, the situation might become so difficult that even those already married will have to live as though they were not married (vs 29). Perhaps Paul was referring to husbands and wives being separated from each other because of economic distress or persecution.

To consider the circumstances is good counsel for engaged people today. The average age for first-time brides and grooms is climbing, which suggests that couples are waiting longer to get married.....

Second, face the responsibilities honestly (vss 32-35).

The emphasis in this paragraph is on the word care, which means “to be anxious, to be pulled in different directions.” It is impossible for two people to live together without burdens of one kind or another, but there is no need to rush into marriage and create more problems. Marriage requires a measure of maturity, and age is no guarantee of maturity.

Once again, Paul emphasized living for the Lord. He did not suggest that it was impossible for a man or a woman to be married and serve God acceptably, because we know too many people who have done it. But the married servant of God must consider his or her mate, as well as the children God may give them; and this could lead to distraction. It is a fact of history that both John Wesley and George Whitefield might have been better off had they remained single — Wesley’s wife finally left him, and Whitefield traveled so much that his wife was often alone for long periods of time.

It is possible to please both the Lord and your mate, if you are yielded to Christ and obeying the Word. Many of us have discovered that a happy home and satisfying marriage are a wonderful encouragement in the difficulties of Christian service. Unmarried believers who feel a call to serve God should examine their own hearts to see if marriage will help or hinder their ministry. They must also be careful to wed mates who feel a like call to serve God. Each person has his own gift and calling from God and must be obedient to His Word.

Recall my advice last week that one ought to marry for true companionship that brings God glory and fulfills you in fulfilling God’s will for you and your spouse.

Third, each situation is unique (vss 36-38).

Paul addressed here the fathers of the unmarried girls. In that day, it was the parents who arranged the marriages, the father in particular as referred to in 2Cor. 11:2. Paul had already said here in vs 35 that he was not laying down an ironclad rule for everybody to follow, regardless of circumstances. Now he made it clear that the father had freedom of choice whether or not he would give his daughter in marriage.

I have noticed that often in churches marriages come in “packs.” One couple gets engaged and before long four couples are engaged. If all of these engagements are in the will of God, it can be a very exciting and wonderful experience; but I fear that some couples get engaged just to keep up with the crowd. Sometimes in Christian schools, couples get what I call “senior panic” and rush out of engagement and into marriage immediately after graduation, lest they be left “waiting at the church.” Sad to say, not all of these marriages are successful.

Even though our modern approach to dating and marriage was completely foreign to the Corinthians, the counsel Paul gave them still applies today. It is a wise thing for couples to counsel with their parents and with their Christian leaders in the church, lest they rush into something which afterward they regret.

Paul hit on a key problem in vs 36 when he mentioned “the flower of her youth.” This is a delicate phrase that simply means the girl is getting older. Dr. Kenneth Wuest translates it “past the bloom of her youth.” She is starting to become one of the “unclaimed blessings” in the church. The danger, of course, is that she rush into marriage just to avoid becoming a spinster, and she might make a mistake.

Each situation is unique, and parents and children must seek the Lord’s will. It takes more than two Christian people to make a happy marriage. Not every marriage that is scriptural is necessarily sensible.

Finally, remember that marriage is for life (vs 39-40).

It is God’s will that the marriage union be permanent, a lifetime commitment. There is no place in Christian marriage for a “trial marriage,” nor is there any room for the “escape hatch” attitude: “If the marriage doesn’t work, we can always get a divorce.”

For this reason, marriage must be built on something sturdier than good looks, money, romantic excitement, and social acceptance. There must be Christian commitment, character, and maturity. There must be a willingness to grow, to learn from each other, to forgive and forget, to minister to one another. The kind of love Paul described in 1Cor. 13, is what is needed to cement two lives together.

Paul closed the section by telling the widows that they were free to marry, but “only in the Lord” (vs 39). This means that they must not only marry believers, but marry in the will of God. Paul’s counsel (for the reasons already given) was that they remain single, but he left the decision to them.

God has put “walls” around marriage, not to make it a prison, but to make it a safe fortress. The person who considers marriage a prison should not get married. When two people are lovingly and joyfully committed to each other — and to their Lord — the experience of marriage is one of enrichment and enlargement. They grow together and discover the richness of serving the Lord as a “team” in their home and church.

This I thank God so much is my testimony, coz the reason I married young was after I felt a burden to serve God in a lot of work for which I really needed a helper, and in waiting upon Him, he hasn’t disappointed me with the wife He gave me, we have always worked together as caterers and served the Lord together so enjoyably, that even as the children have now left the home literally, we are literally on a fresher level of that experience.

As you review this chapter, you cannot help but be impressed with the seriousness of marriage. Paul’s counsel makes it clear that God takes marriage seriously and that we cannot disobey God’s Word without suffering painful consequences. While both Paul and Jesus leave room for divorce under certain conditions, this can never be God’s first choice for a couple. God hates divorce (Mal. 2:14-16) and certainly no believer should consider divorce until all avenues of reconciliation have been patiently explored.

While a person’s marital failure may hinder him from serving as a pastor or deacon (1Tim. 3:2, 12), it need not keep him from ministering in other ways. A man does not have to hold an office in order to have a ministry.

In summary, each person must ask himself or herself the following questions if marriage is being contemplated:

1. What is my gift from God?
2. Am I marrying a true believer?
3. Are the circumstances such that marriage is right?
4. How will marriage affect my service for Christ?
5. Am I prepared to enter into this union for life?

That is all the reasons why sufficient pre-marital counseling is of great importance as a prerequisite for a successful marriage.