

Dr. Gary Meadors, 1 Corinthians, Lecture 19, Paul's Response to Issues of Sex and Marriage, 1 Corinthians 7:7b-40

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This is Dr. Gary Meadors in his teaching on the book of 1 Corinthians. This is session 19, Paul's Response to Issues of Sex and Marriage, 1 Corinthians 7:7b-40.

Well, welcome back to our discussion of 1 Corinthians chapter 7. We are in note pack number 10, and we are on page 92 and 92 of your notes. We're at the bottom of this page, actually two-thirds of the way down, with the number 2a.

We talked last time about 1 Corinthians 7, verses 1 through 7a, basically. Now we're going to run from 7b or so through 24. Here's Talbert's analysis again, and as you can imagine, as you've seen, he does like these chiasms.

A, as each has his or her own special gift from God and so lives, a prime, should have that little asterisk after a and b in the second parts of that, that's part of the formal piece of it, live in terms of the gifts assigned to you. You can see, gifts, gifts, I say to the unmarried widows, I say to the married unbelievers, and then the middle is the Lord says to the married. Well, maybe, maybe not, but there was legitimacy in the ancient world for these chiasms.

There was a sense in that oral culture that, for whatever reason, it tended to help their public speaking and the remembering of material. Whatever the case, there it is. You can look at it and make your own decision. So, one could conform their outline to the above, if you would choose, but I'm following a kind of more traditional outline along the paragraph line.

It all comes out in the same place, but it is just a little bit different in terms of structure. In 7b and 8 through 16, we have what I'm calling the sanctity of marriage. 1b and then 1c here, the unmarried and widows should marry if they do not have the gift of celibacy.

I'm just looking at the outlining pieces. We're under 2a, notice because of the indentations and trying to preserve paper and space on the computer file, we go back to that left margin. 2a is marriage, Paul's gifting is not normative for others, and then 1b, the sanctity of marriage in 7b through 16.

So, here we have it, chapter 7 and verse 7. I'll start at the beginning of verse 7. I wish that you all were as I am, but each of you has his own gift from God. One has this gift, another that gift. Now, the question is, where do you put verse 7? The original NIV

here is not the original. I'm sorry, but the 2011 NIV keeps verse 7 with the preceding paragraph.

Just for fun again, the NRSV does the same thing, and probably if I redid my outline, I'd do the same thing, but I couldn't redo everything as I prepared these notes freshly for our time together. So, if it introduces the next piece as Talbot has it to introduce it, each of you has his own gift from God. One has this gift, another.

Now, to the unmarried. Anytime you have a transitional sort of statement, it just naturally kind of goes with before and with what comes after, and it fits in there. He's already talked about gifting, and he just says it again there at the end of verse 7. The unmarried and widows should marry if they do not have the gift of celibacy, verses 8 and 9. Now, to the unmarried, and when he's talking about the unmarried in that particular case, to the unmarried and widows, I say it is good for them to stay unmarried as I do, but if they cannot control themselves, in other words, if they burn with passion, which is not a bad thing.

It's a created thing. They should marry, for it is better to marry than to burn with passion, and that's where we have that particular statement. Okay, and you have a narrow vision of me.

I'm juggling a few Bible translations and also looking at my Greek text for certain words that sort of key my mind a little bit. So, the unmarried and the widows should marry if they do not have the gift of celibacy. Now, what do we mean about the unmarried and the widows? Also, another thing comes up: the remain as you are principle, page 93, emerges throughout 8 to 16.

Paul's use of good in this passage in 7.7 and in other places, I've got my mind away from that. Let me come back and clear up this confusion. Top of page 93.

Paul's theme of remain as you are emerges. It comes up as a theme throughout 8 to 16. Basically, what he's saying is that as life goes on and you find yourself changing your situation, particularly in this marital thing, it's usually easier to remain as you are now unmarried than to remarry.

Senior ministry is a big thing in the United States right now because the largest statistic of the population is seniors. One of the interesting things is that many couples go into retirement, and one of them dies rather quickly after they get there. This happens all the time.

Well, Paul would say, well, if your spouse dies, it's easier for you to remain unmarried. And he's speaking pragmatically. He's not speaking forensically, in the sense that you must do that.

And it is true. It is easier. So, this couple goes into retirement, say the husband dies and the wife is left, which is usually the way it happens because women tend to last a little longer, it seems.

And say they had three children. Well, I tell you, if you haven't watched this, you've missed an interesting piece of life. Those kids are concerned about what mom's going to do with property and estate.

That's the first thing that comes to their mind many times. They can be good kids. They can be pious children.

But now what? And then if the mother begins to date somebody, and maybe even the children would encourage the companionship, the mother is going to face some difficult questions about what she will do with the estate if she chooses to marry this person. Who knows when she's going to pass? She and her husband built the estate, hoping to pass it on to their children. This is something that pastors need to be prepared to counsel seniors or anyone for that matter. But for seniors, it's a very common issue as they think about being remarried.

There are functional issues involved with the question of marriage and remarriage after you've been widowed. When Paul says it's good for them to remarry, he's not speaking morally good, but functionally good. It's not a moral issue because it's okay.

But it's functionally convenient not to remarry, but it's going to be functionally convenient if you can't control yourself that you should remarry. You can do it either way. Paul is saying that you should just be aware of who you are and how you deal with life as you come into those circumstances.

Paul addressed the unmarried and the widows. Now, the word for unmarried is *agamis*, an accent on the *ga* there. That word also applies to male widowers.

There is a word for widows, which we get in our Greek text, but there's no word for male widowers that's separate from the word unmarried. So that raises some questions. The problem is that the first term translated as unmarried can have a very broad range of meanings and is very contextually dependent on its meaning.

Is it unmarried males, or is it the unmarried period? This context is clearly linked to the widows. So, it seems very likely that perhaps we're talking about male widowers and female widows—the first bullet point.

The term for unmarried only occurs in this chapter in the New Testament, and its meaning varies in 7.8 and 7.11. One time it refers to what we're talking about now, perhaps unmarried men or widowed men, but it can also refer to divorced women. The word divorce is sort of loaded with women whose husbands left them on 7:11. It

can refer to a single man in 7:32 or to a single virgin woman in 7:34. So this word is all over the map. It's all over the map, and you have to deal with it in context because the word won't solve the problem.

Unmarried may cover everyone in that category. Widowed, divorced, abandoned, never married. Witherington chooses to translate this to the unmarried and especially the widows, thus focusing its meaning on the widows.

It doesn't solve all the problems either. So, language does not yield its meaning on the surface. A number of prominent commentators have noted that this term can mean widowers, the male counterpart to widows.

Such an approach is logically attractive and provides balanced pairs as we have down through these passages. In the overall context of 1 Corinthians 7 and its various categories, this would make good sense. It also avoids the unlikely attitude of Paul to lumping all categories of single and widowers into one non-descript group called the unmarried.

So, it makes good sense to me that we're talking about widowed men and widowed women. When Paul says, as I am in 7-8, is he putting himself under the unmarried category or under the widower category? We don't know whether Paul was married. We have reason to believe that he was.

It's a good creative construct but we have no direct text that tells us all this. You see, Paul was a Jewish elder, and he was probably a Pharisee, and the expected norm for elders was to marry. That was the expected Jewish norm for all men.

It is unlikely that Paul was never married, although it seems clear that he's presently unmarried. But what was his status? Is Paul a widower? Did his wife die? Or did his wife abandon him when he became a believer? That's very likely. We just do not know.

Garland goes on about this as other commentaries do. You can read, but at the end of the day, we don't know. But he was in a state of not being married.

Sure, would have been easy if he had told us. 7-9 makes it clear that widowers and widows who do not have the gift should remarry. The use of burn-in 7-9, most natural in this context, refers to burn with sexual passion, not burn in Gehenna, which was a rabbinic idea, but only needs to observe the tragic history of many celibate priests.

If you say, don't remarry as a widower, or it's better not to remarry, and you look at the history of the Roman church or any Christian religious denomination that has celibate priests, and you see the damage that is denying a legitimate outlet for one's

passion can cause. It can cause lots of damage. We've just heard on the news this week another cardinal who had problems with his celibacy, and it's plagued the Roman Catholic church over the last 20 years particularly.

It's plagued it since it was born, but at the same time, it's come out into the news and has created havoc in the Roman church in the U.S. and in South America in recent decades. They buried it before then. This also supports celibacy as a gift and not a choice for them to remarry.

Remarriage is the norm for people who are widowed unless they don't need it unless they don't want it. My observation is that older individuals, and I mean we're talking people into their 80s and 90s, who get remarried, they're not; some of them younger may do it for sex, but most of them are doing it because they're lonely. They want companions, but I'm telling you it wreaks havoc when you're a pastor of a senior community.

It's an interesting scenario to deal with, but remarriage is okay. In fact, it probably is the norm, particularly for younger widowers and widows. I know one prominent individual whose name I won't mention who was a pastor was a seminary professor, and before his wife died, he held very strongly to the idea that an ordained elder, as he was, should not remarry if his wife dies.

Then his wife died. It wasn't too long after that, maybe a few years, that he remarried. Okay, now he's got to change his view.

Let's be careful about how we set views in cement when they are not prescriptive items but are items that relate to the way life is. Marriage and remarriage in the widower situation is a norm. On 7.9, there's an article by J. Edward Ellis in a journal that I've listed here for you.

He notes that Talbert, Fee, Wetherington, and Furnish all agree that Paul does not, in 1 Corinthians, express a desire or even a fond wish that all Christians be solemn. I've heard 1 Corinthians 7 used by numerous people as a proof text for celibacy being superior. Anybody who says that has abrogated their right to interpret 1 Corinthians 7 and revealed themselves as incompetent to do so.

That is not what 1 Corinthians 7 is about. It is not a proof text for the primacy, the spirituality, the better judgment of not being married after you've been widowed or your wife has died. The created norm is marriage, and you don't get rid of the created norm because it was that way for a reason after someone's gone.

There are pragmatic issues that make it challenging and difficult in a variety of ways. But do not try to make it biblical teaching that it's better not to because all you're

doing is abusing the bible. In verses 10 to 16 at the bottom of page 93, 2c, marriage is permanent.

10 to 16. The first item here is the dominical tradition in verse 10. 7-10.

To the unmarried, I give this command, not I but the Lord. Now, this is where Garland's division of sections comes in handy because he says it's a new section, and I think that it is. It's even divided out in the ASV, while the NIV keeps some smaller pieces for these paragraphs.

But in 10 and 11, which is the paragraph in the NIV. To the married, I give this command, not I but the Lord. A wife must not separate from her husband.

But if she does, she must remain unmarried or else be reconciled to her husband and a husband must not divorce his wife. Verses 10 and 11 I call the dominical tradition. Dominical is just based on the Latin word for Jesus' tradition, the father's tradition.

In 7, 10, and 11, Paul addresses the wife's first. This reverses his pattern from other texts in chapter 7. This may imply an issue in Corinth. I'm not sure.

It could be an undercurrent that Paul is bringing out that we might miss. But he addresses the widows first. Dominical is the Latin way to refer to the teaching of Jesus.

Paul begins his address to married couples by calling forth Jesus' teaching from the gospels, which is very thin but is there. Paul uses the purest of the gospel traditions, that is, Mark and Luke because Matthew said except for fornication in the dominical tradition in this domain. He does not mention Matthew and the exception.

Now, that could mean one of two things. He chose not to mention it because he sees this as more normative or he did not understand the exception to mean liberty to remarry or that that was a grounds for divorce. Now, that's a subject we're going to talk about in the third of our three-part series in chapter 7, and I'll explain it more there, but for the time being, verses 10 and 11 are pretty absolute.

So are the gospels. No, if you're married and get divorced, don't remarry. That's the gospel tradition.

Some would say Matthew is an exception to that and that is something that needs to be looked at carefully. If it is, it's the only place where it is an exception because Mark and Luke speak in the absolute. This is pretty touchy stuff.

Dominico is the Latin way to refer to the teaching of Jesus. Paul begins his address to married couples by calling forth Jesus's teachings from the gospels. Paul uses the purest form of the gospel traditions.

The Matthaean exception clause is not present. The absence of the exception clause may support one of the specialized views, and we'll see later, of this clause rather than it being some general exception that you can get remarried for sexual sin. It seems that if Paul had understood sexual immorality as a general ground for divorce, 1st Corinthians 7 was the perfect place to mention it, but he doesn't.

He keeps the absolute. He keeps the ideal, and that ought to raise some eyebrows for those who are in the discussion of divorce and remarriage. I'll come back to that.

In verses 12 through 16, we have the Pauline explanation. Verses 12 through 16, to the rest I say this, I, not the Lord. Now, let's go back to the Dominico tradition.

I didn't talk about this, I need to. When he says, to the married, I give this command, not I but the Lord, and then in 12, he says I, not the Lord. Does Paul say that 10 and 11 are authoritative verses, but 12 and so forth is my opinion and has no authority? Not likely.

That'd be kind of dumb, wouldn't it? When he says I, not I but the Lord, I, not the Lord, he's exclusively referring to Dominico tradition. In verses 10 and 11, Jesus said something he could quote, and he does, not I but the Lord. In verses 12 and following, he doesn't have anything from Jesus he can quote, so he's going to say it.

So I, not the Lord, am not accepting these verses from any kind of authority; it's just accepting them from the fact that Jesus didn't say anything he could use. Be very careful with that phrase, not I but the Lord, I, not the Lord. It's not undermining the authority of anything or exalting the authority of Dominico tradition.

It's just saying I can quote him here, I can't quote him here. That's all it's saying. Be very careful with that.

If any brother has a wife who is not a believer and she is willing to live with him, he must not divorce her. That's a pretty absolute statement, isn't it? There are no grounds for divorce in regard to someone not being a Christian, and you're married to them. That's not a grounds.

Unequal yoke, as it's often referred to, is something you need to avoid getting into, but if you're already in it, it is not at any level or in any way a reason for divorce on the part of the Christian. The unbeliever might choose to get rid of it and watch how this goes. But if she does, for example, separate, this assumes she's a believer.

However, if she does, she must remain unmarried or else be reconciled with her husband, and a husband must not divorce his wife.

And the same thing would apply to them in verses 10 and 11. So, the bottom line is that those who are married should not be separated. End of discussion.

If a separation occurs, they're not to remarry. End of discussion. That fairly represents the absolute statements of Mark and Luke in the divorce pericopes in those Gospels.

That's pretty absolute. That is not received well in the current culture of Christianity, but it's there. You deal with it.

I'll come back to some of this a little later in the third segment. And I'll say just again, the end of that paragraph, the second paragraph on page 94, at the end of it, it seems that if Paul had understood sexual immorality as a general grounds for divorce, this is the perfect place to bring it in. And he did not do so.

He did not give us an exception clause in verses 10 and 11. He gave us the absolute, which is how Mark and Luke represent Jesus. The only place in all of the Bible where there's an issue about this is in Matthew 5 and 7. Actually, excuse me, in Matthew 5 and chapter 19, there are two exception clauses.

They're only in Matthew. I'm going to unpack that for you later, but not right now. Verses 12 to 16, the Paulian explanation.

Paul affirms the sanctity of marriage, even in mixed relationships between the unsaved and the saved. To the rest, I say this, I not the Lord. If any brother has a wife who's not a believer and she's willing to live with him, he must not divorce her.

That's absolute. And if a woman has a husband who is not a believer and he's willing to live with her, she must not divorce him. For the unbelieving husband has been sanctified through his wife, and the unbelieving wife has been sanctified through her husband.

They were believing a husband, otherwise, your children would be unclean, but as it is, they are holy. All right.

What about 12 to 16? I better read 15 to 16. But if the unbeliever leaves, let it be so. The brother or sister is not bound in such circumstances.

God has called us to live in peace. How do you know, wife, whether you will save your husband? In other words, if you remain together, your influence could bring

him to salvation. Or a wife could be brought to salvation through the husband's testimony during the marriage.

This is pretty straightforward, unequivocal stuff. You can play hermeneutical ventriloquism all you want, but you can't get rid of it. Be very careful that you don't abuse the Bible in the domain of divorce and remarriage.

Now, let's think through this a little bit here, and we'll think through it more later. Verses 12 to 14—Paul's use of I, not the Lord.

7:12 and 13 clearly teach that the marriage bond is not trumped for some spiritual reason. Now, that was clear in 1 to 7, but it's clear again. Just because you're a believer and you're married to an unbeliever doesn't give you a reason to get divorced and go find yourself a believer.

Although saved and unsaved partners reflect the greatest of spiritual incompatibility, there is still not a reason for divorce. Unequal yoke marriages cannot be dissolved for so-called spiritual reasons. Think of it this way.

If conversion finds one in an unequal yoke marriage, then that is God's will for you. Remain as you are. You can't use spirituality to exit that marriage.

Now, there are a lot of other issues about marriage and divorce. The questions of abuse, the danger of a spouse, and so forth. We're not talking about any of that.

We're talking about somebody, Paul said, who is willing to continue the marriage. I know one prominent marriage in my pastoral ministry where this happened. In some friends of ours, the husband was not married.

I mean, the husband was not a Christian. The wife was. She came to our church.

He ran a golf course. I used to play on his golf course. The golf course was here.

My house was here. The church was down here. He would come to church with her, not always, but frequently.

I went, and I talked to him until I was blue in the face. He did not have any sense that he needed Jesus. He was as honest about it as the day is long.

He had no compulsion. He had no motivation. He had no conviction that he needed Jesus, but he was more than happy for his wife to be involved in the church and to go to church.

He even closed the golf course, if I remember correctly, on Sunday. And sometimes he would come with her. Well, I left that pastorate decades later.

I went back to that church, and guess what? He's now a Christian. It took a long, long time, but he finally came to Christ. Now, there are all kinds of stories about these things.

Stories are not an authority for the text, but the fact is, how do you know that you're living godly in an incompatible situation won't bring that other person to Christ? Now, you got to be careful how you do that. You don't browbeat them with the church. You don't browbeat them with, they're just an old sinner.

You don't browbeat them with this and that. You'd be a good wife. You'd be a good husband and see where it goes.

You are not to initiate the leaving in a situation where they're willing to stay. I've seen some pretty interesting situations like that that I could go on and on and on about, but I'm not going to do that. You probably have your own illustrations.

Spiritual issues do not trump marriage. Marriage is marriage—end of discussion.

What's the code of holiness about? It is interesting that Paul has reversed the metaphor of defilement. In 5 and 5-6, he talked about bad leaven. In 6-15 to 17, he talked about bad leaven, but now he's got a leaven metaphor whereby the believer may be able to reach the unbelievers, and the children may be led toward Jesus because of the Christian partner in that marriage.

It's just plain old facts. There's nothing secretive here. The focus, however, is environmental, not forensic.

The unbeliever is not going to be saved just because of the believer, neither are the children. It's functional. It's environmental, not forensic.

The Old Testament had a tradition of holiness by association. Exodus and Leviticus, even Romans 11. Leon Morris makes this statement.

It is not possible here to give a precise definition of what this verse signifies, that is, verse 14. But it is a scriptural principle that the blessings arising from fellowship with God are not confined to the immediate recipients, but extend to others, mainly those others who see the recipients of God's grace. So, a good Christian in an unequal yoke marriage, not to initiate it, but when you're in it already, or you maybe even slid into it during a time of not being consistently Christian, you're in it.

That's the end of the discussion. You're in it. Stay and live for God, and pray that your partner may come to know Jesus.

While it is a privilege to be in an environment of holiness for one's own good and possible salvation, it's not a substitute for personal belief. All in all, marriage is a sacred institution. Paul's argument here, halachic legal type argument, is focused on the legitimization of the mixed marriage and not on the forensic issues of salvation itself.

The phrase is sanctified is basically means you're put in a good position to get to know God. That means you're eligible to know God. You have a privileged position.

Meeting the mixed marriage must be maintained, if at all possible. That's what Paul's calling for. You can't use it, the unequal yoke, as a justification for divorce to marry a Christian.

If you do that, you have violated God's intentions, and you violated the sacredness of marriage, the kinship that it creates, for probably lots of reasons, but not legitimately so, according to Paul. Page 95. In light of all this, how will you approach counseling married couples, where one is a believer, and one is not? How will you support, how will you excuse me, and how will your support of the marriage affect the unbelieving person? For example, what would you do if this unbelieving husband stormed into your church during your weekday hours, and you're in your study, and he storms in exceedingly angry that he can't do some things with his business partners on Sunday because his wife is in church, insists on going to church, and he has explicitly asked her, on occasion, and he makes this point, he says, she can go to church all she wants, but every now and then, once every month, or once every two months, she needs to be with me for the good of my business, and he comes in and reads the riot act to you, and blames you for this problem.

What are you going to do? You're going to pin him up against the wall, say he's a little guy, you're a big guy, and say you need Jesus. Are you going to tell him, well, sir, you should be in church with her? How are you going to handle that? I'll tell you how I would handle it, and you may not like it. I'm retired, I don't really care.

Teasing. I didn't have that occasion with this person that I have mentioned, but if that had happened, this is what I hope I would have done. I'd stand up and be friendly toward this person; I'd say to him, I understand, and I'm going to talk to your wife about it privately.

Then, with your permission, I'd like to come and talk to both of you and probably at that point, he's very happy. He's going to say, oh yeah, you can come over anytime. I'd love to talk to you.

Then, I would have a conference with his wife, and I would say, look, I think what you need to do when your husband has a business meeting, if it truly is occasional, like he says, maybe even once a month, would be frequent, that you need to honor him and not be here. She would probably say, I gasp. Preacher, you're telling me not to come and see God on Sunday? I'd say, well, you see God every day of the week, don't you? I want you to be obedient to your husband in this situation.

Now, we're assuming there's no abuse involved here. You need to honor him as the one who's providing for your household. This has nothing to do with gender issues and so forth.

Don't get into that on me. I'm just talking about the marriage and what Paul is talking about in this chapter. I would say to her, go with him, honor him in that regard, have a good time, frankly.

You might be glad not to hear me for a change. And I dare say that her husband's going to be shocked. Sometimes, shock is the best way to get people's ears open and their eyes open.

And I would follow up and go to their home later and just have a social time to talk and share Christ, not in a pushy way. Let the marriage work. Promote the marriage.

And by doing so, you're actually promoting God. And you have a better avenue for Christ to enter into that situation than if you stiffen up and start acting more pious than you really are. Marriage trumps claimed spirituality.

You can't walk away from this passage honestly and not see that fact. Now, as I mentioned, this passage is not to be used to cover up spousal abuse. If this man had been beating his wife, I would have handled it in a very different way.

But he was a good husband, providing, even loving, even coming to church on occasion, but not very often. You've got to use some good sense. Paul gives us some advice if we just open our ears and quit being naive about some of this.

Furthermore, in 2E, Paul only allows an unbeliever to leave. In verses 15 and 16, it's all about the believer staying and the unbeliever leaving. There is no statement anywhere in this passage about the believer making the choice to leave.

It's always the unbeliever's choice. But what does he say in 15 and 16? He recognizes the fact that a believing partner cannot force a spouse to maintain the marriage. You may want to maintain the marriage that the unbeliever wants to leave.

You can't make them stay. You don't have the power to do that. Paul recognizes this fact and releases the believer from the pressure of being victimized by an unbeliever leaving the relationship.

There are several key pieces to this text. Notice how the NASB, I quote this one this time, yet if the unbelieving one leaves, let him leave. The brother or sister is not under bondage in such cases, but God has called us to peace.

The ESV, 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.

Notice the difference between the NASB and the ESV. The NASB, under bondage in such cases, brings in a contextual statement. The ESV says you're not enslaved, period.

What's enslaved referred to? Does it refer to the point that you have to make them stay? Or have they now expanded it by implication to mean that you're free to remarry? See, a lot of people bring remarriage into this passage, and I will question whether that's possible. NIV, that's the original, but if the unbeliever leaves, let him do so. A believer, man, or woman, is not bound in such circumstances, sort of like the NASB, but a little different.

God has called us to live in peace. Let's see what the 2011 says because I hadn't read it up to this point. Verse 16.

How do you know, wife, whether you will save your husband or whether you will save your wife? I'm not in the right place here. Verse 15. Okay, yeah, 15.

But if the unbeliever leaves, let it be so. The brother or sister is not bound in such circumstances, very much like the original NIV.

See, now that raises another question: what does not bound mean? But it does at least permit the believer to let loose and let it happen, but not to cause it, or not to initiate it, when the circumstances are good. Okay, the Greek word for separate or leave was a common Greek word in papyri marriages and marriage contracts for divorce. So, it is normal vocabulary in this particular situation.

There are three striking items here. The leaving is put in the imperative mode. Let him or her, let the unbeliever, separate.

In other words, Paul is pretty strong. He says, if they're going to go, let them go. You do not have to make them stay.

You don't have to be under that obligatory idea. Furthermore, you can't make them stay. I think Paul's first choice would be to stick with it.

He said that. But if they're going to go, you don't have to go to all kinds of gyrations to make them stay. Brother and sister are specific labels here.

The brother and the sister, they don't have to make them stay. Not bound is the question. What does not bound mean? In many places I read, they extend not bound to remarriage, when this is not a text about remarriage right now.

This is a text about a divorce and leaving, not what you are going to do afterward. The not bound needs to be retained in the context. Not bound should be understood in the context of this specific text.

Therefore, not bound means, number one, you do not have to feel guilty that you could not redeem the marriage and make them stay. You're not bound to that idea. Secondly, not bound refers to the closing statement of peace.

It indicates that you should not feel bound to fight in a manner or to maneuver that goes beyond reasonable effort. You should try to save the marriage, but if you can't, you do not have to feel bound. You don't have to go to special levels, ridiculous levels, or desperate levels to make it happen and stay.

It is unlikely that not bound has anything to do with remarriage, but it's often used that way. Being not bound means you're free; do whatever you please. That is out of context here.

It's out of the dominical tradition, which Paul has reaffirmed in verses 10 and 11. So why jump on that bandwagon that not bound means, whoopee, I'm free. It doesn't mean that at all.

Be careful how you use the Bible. It's out of bounds to use it that way. In 17 to 24, let's come back now to this remain-as-you-are principle.

Paul emphasizes remain-as-you-are throughout the unit of chapter 7. 17, 20, 24, it's all in there. However, remain-as-you-are is used as a principle, not a law. The principle to remain-as-you-are is pragmatically good, but it is not required.

The remaining, almost as you are unmarried, is a concession because marriage is the norm. But if you don't want to get remarried, remaining as you are is a good thing. Fewer problems, fewer issues.

Paul emphasizes remain-as-you-are. It's presumed, however, a principle, not as a law. We might call this the principle of providence, where you find yourself bloom.

But not all can remain-as-you-are because they burn with passion. And it may not be sexual passion. It may be the passion of being with somebody else on a regular basis, having conversations, having a partner, or having companionship.

We were created for that. Don't deny it. Looking on down the page, I'm trying to decide on the fly here.

Can I get through this and get on to the next level? I've page 96. I'm going to take about 15 minutes. It's going to go a little longer than usual so we have three units in chapter 7, not four.

Okay. The last part of chapter 7, verses 25 to 40. I don't know if you're hearing that or not.

That's the first time that I've lived here for 10 years that the ice cream man and the music they play have come by. I am almost ready to run out and get an ice cream and leave you here, or I could bring one back and eat it for you. But we're going to stay, and I'm going to finish the chapter.

I'm going to sacrifice for the sake of 1 Corinthians and for your sake. Paul's advice to the unmarried. And verse 25 and verse 40 sort of balance.

Verse 25, now about virgins, I have no command. Verse 40, in my judgment, she is happy if she stays as she is. I think that I, too, have the spirit of God.

And it's about being unmarried and married. Okay, enough. Moving on.

For the betrothed, that is the engaged, the literal rendition of verse 25 in the NRSV. Now, concerning virgins, I have no command of the Lord, but I will give my opinion. There's no dominical tradition.

I'm going to tell you what I think. I'm an apostle. What I think counts, but it is not necessarily the last word on the statement.

So, he's giving advice, but good advice from his standpoint, but not normative advice necessarily. Let's look at the NIV 35. I am saying this for your own good, not to restrict you, but that you may live in the right way in undivided devotion to the Lord.

There's another problem with our 25. I read 35, 25, excuse me. Now about virgins, I have no command from the Lord, but I give you a judgment.

Notice the new NIV 2011 kept it generic and didn't try to deal with it. I'm going to show you a chart in a second that's going to go in lots of different directions here. So,

when it brings up virgins, what does that mean? Does that mean they've never been married? Does it mean they're engaged people? Maybe they're betrothed to somebody? That was a very serious thing in the ancient world.

Where is it going to go? Is it a father's daughter, or is it when they were betrothed, some of the authority shifts to the future husband, but not sex? Who controls the virgin at that point? Who controls the woman? The father or the husband? Some cultural things are going on. For the betrothed, engaged Greek equals virgins, and most of the translations leave it that way, so we have to study to figure it out.

The present crisis flavors the prospects of marriage. The remain-as-you-are is the wisest course of action, but marriage is still permitted. I need to read this text out loud to you.

7:25. Now, about virgins, I have no command from the Lord, but I give a judgment as one who is trustworthy by the Lord's mercy. Because of the present crisis, please underline that this flavors this whole context right here.

It may flavor the whole chapter, but certainly, it flavors this present paragraph. We'll talk about the present crisis in a moment, but it most likely relates to Paul's. It could relate to something that has happened historically, some think that, or it relates to Paul's eschatological view that Jesus is coming any moment. And regardless of eschatology, you don't have to be a pre-tribulation or rapturous to say that the next event in the eschatological plan is that Jesus is coming.

And so, consequently, it's not about any of those kinds of issues, that is, the raptures and stuff like that. It's just that the eschaton is about to dawn on the world, and Paul lived with that in mind. Because of the present crisis, I think that it's good for a man to remain as he is.

If you think about Jeremiah, who was commanded not to marry because of the Babylonian captivity, don't get married because they're going to get awful complicated, Jeremiah. So, I'm telling you, I'm going to do you a favor. It's not going to be fun, but I'm going to do you a favor.

And Paul, in a sense, is saying, well, we're not Jeremiah's time, and I'm not going to quote Jeremiah to you. I'm not going to beat you with the Bible, but I want to tell you as your mentor that you ought to think about this because the crisis is about to fall on us. The eschaton is about to dawn.

You may not even have time to have children, and if you do, you may not have time to raise them. And what kind of challenges are you going to face? He was conditioned in that way because he's not dealing here with an absolute no. He's dealing with advice, and his advice comes from his own personal perspective.

Which was a good one, but we've seen that the eschaton has stretched itself out a little bit. Because of the present crisis, I think it is good for a man or a woman to remain as they are. As you pledge to a woman, do not seek to be released.

In other words, if you're betrothed, go ahead. Are you free from such a commitment? Then don't look for a wife. In other words, if you do not marry, you have not sinned.

See, there may have been a subgroup in Corinth that was struggling with this. People who were engaged and were about to get married stopped because they became Christians. What are they going to do? Paul's dealing very tenderly with this, frankly.

But if you do not marry, you have not sinned. But if you do marry, you have not sinned. And if a virgin marries, she has not sinned.

But those who marry will face many troubles in this life, and I want to spare you. But that's conditioned by the present crisis. What I mean, brothers and sisters is that the time is short.

Here comes the eschatology. From now on, those who have wives should live as if they do not. Those who mourn as if they did not.

Those who are happy as if they were not. Those who buy something as if it were not theirs to keep. Those who use the things of the world as if not engrossed in them.

For this world, in its present form, is passing away. So, Paul's eschatological expectation flavors this in an immense way. You might say, well, it should flavor us, too.

Well, yes, it does in certain ways, but we can see pragmatically that because 2,000 years have passed since Paul said that, the moment eschatology that Paul seemed to own does not trump the normative biblical narrative of how to live your life. And if you're going to get married, get married. But you're going to live with the consequences.

That's what Paul is saying. It's normal. It's biblical to go ahead and let the virgin marry, let the father give the virgin to be married, and let the betrothed husband fulfill the marriage.

But it's going to be tough, is what Paul is saying. He's not trying to get them out of it. He's just being honest in their management of what they're going to do.

I would like to follow up on that for some of them who lived another 40 years, and Jesus didn't come. I'd like to know what they have to say now. You know, that would be an interesting conversation, wouldn't it? None of you are in that category, so we can't have that conversation.

Top of page 97. The audience for this section are the virgins. The Parthenos, that's the Greek word for virgins.

The Greek word may mean or the Hebrew word for virgins could mean a virgin as we normally think of it or an unmarried girl. In the Greek, it's pretty restrictive. It means virgin like we think of it, absolutely never known a man.

The NIV provides the literal rendering of virgins, and the ESV provides the interpretive translation betrothed. This is fascinating. In this passage, the ESV is more dynamic than the NIV.

It claims to be formal but now it's a dynamic equivalent, calling them betrothed. That's an interpretation. The meaning of virgins in 7:25 is highly disputed, although 736 and 38 is clearly a betrothed issue.

So, there could be a broader category in 725 that differs from 736 to 38. All these subgroups are not easy stuff. We've got all these little subgroups going on, and it's hard for us to ferret it out so far from the event.

So there could be a broader category in 7:25 that differs from 7:36 to 38, which is clearly betrothed. There are at least four proposals to explain virgins here. Is it a father and his virgin daughter? He won't give her up for marriage.

Is it a man and a woman in a spiritual marriage? Now, this is transported into the text there. Could it be that one of the subgroups in Corinth had over-spiritualized this? They got married but they haven't had sex because they think it's the wrong thing to do. That is at least the proposal of some.

Some say it's a Levirate marriage, which I think is not true. That is a relative having children with his brother's wife because she's barren. That's more OT.

Or is it an engaged betrothed couple? The father-daughter, the number two, the man-woman in the spiritual marriage, and the fourth one are pretty common if you look at commentaries. People argue those views mostly. Garland observes that the most plausible option is that the virgins comprise betrothed women.

Presumably, those who are engaged have misgivings about whether to go through with their marriage because of the present distress and perhaps because of a wrong

view of sex and marriage. We just don't know. Some think the present distress is a local famine.

Winter argues for that. Some think the present distress is some localized persecution of the community. The Theological Dictionary of the New Testament argues for that.

Some think the present distress, most of them do, is the eschaton that's about to dawn. Barrett, Conzelman, Garland, and most interpreters see it as an eschatological issue. Dealing with localized challenges is part and parcel of being Christian.

You would not call for extreme measures that Paul was suggesting, that you need to be careful because of the present distress. 729-31 also gives a strong eschaton flavor to this context. Questions to consider.

If Paul had our perspective on the temporal aspect of waiting for the eschaton, would he have given the same advice? I think that's a fair question. This is different because of the normative life events and Paul's any-moment eschatology. We still have an any-moment eschatology.

We don't know when God's going to break into history. We can't say it will be a thousand years from now or next week. That's always, always, always been true.

You live with that expectation, but you manage your life as if there is time for management to take place. Those things are kind of held equally. Manage your life as if you'll have time to make it go out.

Manage your life as if Jesus is coming tomorrow. We hold those in tension. They don't come together.

They're intention. We have to deal with that as Christians. Talbot sees Paul raising and responding to four issues.

I'm going to let you read that. I'm going to move on to page 98 in the middle or 2a. Paul honestly reflects on the real world.

Marriage brings new values, and he goes on about this very clearly from 29-31. What I mean brothers and sisters that the time is short from now on. Those who have wives, we already read that.

It's tough because of this possible present distress. The special issue of betrothed virgins. Who is the controlling person in verses 36 and 38? Well, here's a list.

The Ken James version said virgin in its generic sense. The NASB was even dynamic and said virgin daughter. The NRSV was dynamic and said fiance.

See, they're interpreting. Dynamic is interpretive translation. It's functional, yes, but it's not fully formal.

ESV, toward his betrothed. The New English Bible, a partner in celibacy. That's that subgroup, I guess.

NIV, toward the virgin he's engaged to. 2011, the same way. There's a footnote in the NIV that calls him his daughter, like the NASB, and the New Living Translation, his fiancée, which would be the same as betrothed.

Look at those versions; they're all over the place. It's a challenging passage and one that you'll need to think about more. I can't solve it for you.

I can only stimulate you to realize that it's something that you need to think about and be humble about. There are two or three options here that can be explained and can fit the context without too much tension. You can look at those, and then you can either make a choice or just share a teaching moment with your people.

The teaching moment is that we are uninspired interpreters and that God will have to clarify some things for us in the eschaton. You can only imagine the literature base behind this verse. It's massive.

736 has two conditional clauses. That's if. If so, I'll read 7:36 because I need to explain these clauses a little bit.

I know I'm getting longer, but we're going to do it. 7:36, if anyone is worried that he might not be acting honorably toward the virgin he is engaged to. What is we talking about ifs in certain classes? Here again, it's all contextual, but if, it's probably so that somebody's worried.

It's assumed to be a fact. That's the rhetorical nature of that particular if. But the second if, and if his passions are too strong, that's not an assumed if.

That's if, at any time in the future, his passions are strong. The word if can be four ways. Three of them are particularly in the Bible.

First, second, and third class conditions. If assumed, if but you weren't, and if at any time in the future. If we confess our sins he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins.

That's a third class condition. If at any time in the future. It's not assumed that you will.

It's not assumed that you won't, for that matter. I could digress for a whole page into ifs in the Bible, but we won't do that. Maybe you'll get curious and figure that out on your own.

Dr. Boyer, B-O-Y-E-R, who's in your bibliography on 1st Corinthians, Boyer wrote some articles in the Grace Journal on the word if and the clause if. You can look those up to your heart's content. They are available online. If I look a bit, you'll find them.

7:38 is an important point. Let me see this verse.

I'm getting close to here. I'm going to make it one way or the other. Yeah, I'm going to make it 7:38.

So, then he who marries the virgin does right, but he who does not marry her does better. Now we have two classes of Christian. Right and better.

What does better mean? The range of meaning for the Greek adjective includes higher in rank, preferable, better, and sometimes superior. As an adjective, it's more useful, more advantageous, or better. This word can be an adjective or a comparative, or it could be a simple adjective or a comparative adjective, if you please, to be clear.

Or it could be an adverb, the manner of something. Whatever it is, comparative in this text is not moral but functional. Let me say that again.

The sentence is there at the bottom of 98. This term is comparative on a moral basis, excuse me, not on a moral basis. Pretty important not, isn't it? Not on a moral basis but on a functional basis.

Paul is not making meaning better, which is a superior choice, a better choice morally or even biblically, but that it is a functional better choice because of the present distress and the problems that are going to arise as a result of that. That flavors the last part of this chapter. Fee observes that singleness is better not because one situation is inherently better than the other, but at the same time when Fee says that, it's precisely what Paul has argued, that it is not inherently better, it's just functionally better.

I think you might be getting that by this time. There's a difference between what is legally better and what is functionally better. Paul has said, legally you may, but functionally, look out, you're going to have problems, and the present distress is going to aggravate it.

Well, there's a lot for you still to do in chapter 7, but a couple of hours on chapter 7 is all that we can devote in our current setting. There's a statement for widows at the

very end, verses 39 and 40. Let's look at this as we depart chapter 7. A woman is bound to her husband as long as he lives, but if her husband dies, she is free to marry anyone she wishes.

You see, and that's stated in Romans too: death dissolves the marriage bond, but he must belong to the Lord. She can only marry in the Lord. In my judgment, she is happy that she is the widow if she stays as she is, and I think I, too, have the spirit of God.

And yet, Paul is not putting the widow under any compulsion about that. Younger widows are going to remarry, and they probably should. Older widows ought to think about it and not get drawn into it unadvisedly, but at the end of the day, they may.

It's perfectly permissible. They're not spiritually less if they marry, but pragmatically and according to the things that happen in life, there are issues that they need to consider. I think that's relatively clear if we read the text correctly and come to the fact that we need to think about it in that way.

Well, chapter 7 is a challenge, isn't it? A lot to do. The literature behind this chapter is massive. I could give you a stack of journal articles like that on this chapter, and that would only be some.

So, it's something to be thought through. I think I've given you a good frame for when you can do that. I've teased out the nuances so that you can continue to think about chapter 7. The third component in this chapter I will do in my next lecture, and that third component is on marriage and divorce in the Bible.

This begins on page 99 in your handout, and you'll notice that this goes on through page 115. So, I'm giving you about 16 to 17 pages, which is pretty big in our setting on the question of marriage and divorce. And we'll talk a little bit about remarriage but mostly about the Bible's teaching on divorce.

I want to run you through this. You need to read it, and I hope you will read it ahead of time because I'm going to be moving quickly, highlighting, and helping you to get your arms around this huge subject so that you can work through it. If you're a ministry professional, you have got to work through it.

You've got to come to some conviction and conclusion about the question of marriage, divorce, and remarriage in the Bible. If you're going to manage a group of people biblically. Have a good day, and I'll see you in the next lecture.

This is Dr. Gary Meadors in his teaching on the book of 1 Corinthians. This is session 19, Paul's Response to Issues of Sex and Marriage, 1 Corinthians 7:7b-40.