

# **Dr. Gary Meadors, 1 Corinthians, Lecture 18, 1 Corinthians 7:1-7a, Paul's Response to Issues of Sex and Marriage**

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This is Dr. Gary Meadors in his teaching on the book of 1 Corinthians. This is session 18, 1 Corinthians 7:1-7a, Paul's Response to Issues of Sex and Marriage.

Well, our work through the book of 1 Corinthians continues. It's quite a book, isn't it? I mean, it's no small task to think through 1 Corinthians. I think books like Romans are easier than 1 Corinthians.

It's not necessarily easier with all the things you can study because Romans set people off into many theological paradigms and creative constructs, but in terms of trying to get our heads around what's actually going on in these texts, it's no small task. We start now with 1 Corinthians chapter 7, which is a very challenging chapter. There's no chapter in 1 Corinthians that isn't challenging, I don't think, but we'll try to give you a big picture of 1 Corinthians 7 and help you to think through this rather complex chapter with a lot of sub-issues involved, and we'll see that as we go along.

At the end of chapter 7, I will have a lecture on the Bible and divorce. Chapter 7 is one of the texts that relates to that subject to a small degree. We don't have but about four or five texts in the Bible that say anything other than no divorce.

That's the general theme of Scripture. We have the Matthaean exception clauses in the book of Matthew, and we have some statements here in 1 Corinthians. So, I'm going to use that as a springboard and give you some information that you might not typically get on the question of the Bible and the divorce.

I hope that you appreciate that. It will probably take us three lectures to achieve the notes that you have in front of you. These are from note pack number 10, which begins with page 87, and this note pack is rather large because of the excursus on the subject of divorce.

It actually goes all the way up to page 115. So, we'll be continuing through chapter 7 for a while. But let's get started with the chapter and some introductory matters here.

You will know that this is the third big segment in the main body of this epistle. 1-11 was Chloé's household, which covered chapters 1 to 4. 5:1, certain oral reports about sexuality and lawsuits, chapters 5 and 6. Then, chapter 7 concerns the things you

have written. I'm sure the NIV 2011 says it the same way, now for the matters you wrote about.

Then we get into the nitty-gritty of some very interesting phrases. Just an overview for a moment. The majority of 1 Corinthians is given to Paul's response to a number of questions that had been posed to him by the Corinthian community.

They wrote something to him. Now, we could stop for a second and ask, well, how did they write it? Did they say, Paul, would you please explain to us what this means? We so respect you and so love you, and we want you to just tell us what we should believe. Or did they write and say, come on now, Paul, you know this, you know this, you know this.

Why are you creating problems by saying something else? I mean, I think there's more of an adversarial nature behind the questions than the sincere nature of them. Please explain to me what's going on. There are lots of little indications of that in the text of chapters 7 to 16, where we see Paul being abused on occasion, certainly being in controversy with some of their ideas, and that's true in most of 1 Corinthians. So, it kicks us off.

In our introduction, we saw this peri-death phrase, but nonetheless, as I've given to you on page 87, we start with chapter 7, which covers marriage and sexual issues. Then, chapters 8 through 10 discuss the food offered to idols and some of the cultural issues of the pagan temples. Then chapter 11 is about church order and gender, and we could add the Lord's Supper, which is part of church order in that chapter.

Then chapters 12 to 14 have to do with spiritual gifts, has to do with a lot more than that, but we'll see that when we get there. Chapter 15 is on the resurrection of humans, and then chapter 16 closes out with the collection of funds for the saints in Jerusalem, and then we have the closing to the epistle itself. We're about halfway through the book of 1 Corinthians in many ways, but we have some very, very large subjects to consider ahead of us.

So, about halfway is my assumption. I think I'm trying to bring our lectures into a 30-hour limit, and we're approaching 15 hours in our lecture as we go through chapter 7. Actually, by the time we get to chapter 7, we're right around 15 hours. I hope you'll hang in there with us, and we'll continue.

I'm sure by now you have a couple of commentaries, some things that you're looking at and reading. If not, it's never too late. Remember, you are what you read.

I'm just a guide. I'm pushing you to be a student yourself. All right, now we're reflecting on this organization of 1 Corinthians 7. Charles Talbert, again, is a very brief book.

It's a nice quick read before you get into sections, and yet he does tend toward these chiasmic structures, but at the same time, you can get the logical flow of a section. Talbert's organization of this chapter is structurally compelling, though. You can see that in his volume.

He notes the marker Paul often uses in 1 Corinthians is now concerning the peri-dea. Let's see if the 2011 NIV is using this. Now for the matters you wrote about.

It says now, but it doesn't say now concerning. This is where the formal equivalents, such as a 1911, a 1909 ASV, perhaps the NASB would do it. Let me see what the revised standard version does for us on this particular item for chapter 7. Now, concerning, thank you.

There you have it. Peri-dei, now concerning, is a very important indicator. I'm glad that they kept it.

The NIV didn't, so you'll have to dig. I've told you where they are anyway. Tell you again right here, 7:1, 20, 7:25, 8:1, 12:1, 16:1, 16:12, and there are some variations to mark some of the other subjects.

This marker occurs in a number of places, although this marker does not always occur to flag another question or a challenge from the Corinthian community. So, it's there most of the time, but it's not absolutely consistent, and you will have to see that. The 1 Corinthians is so clear about subject change that that should never be a problem for anyone.

Using these markers and observing the paragraphs, 1 Corinthians 7 can yield an outline that I've given to you here at the bottom of 87. First of all, in chapter 7, verses 1 to 24, Paul responds to issues of section marriage, and then B, Paul advises the unmarried in light of practical wisdom, 7:25 to 40. We're kind of following that outline in your notes.

There is a little snafu that I created because number 4 at the top of page 87 covers all 7 to 16, which means A should be chapter 7 total, and you'll see how I broke it down here. So, my outline deviates just a little bit. I'll see if we get back to that later.

Because we have such a wide span of notes, sometimes it's hard to keep track of that outline anyway, and yet that outline is exceedingly important. So if you were to pull out the outline so you can see it and get the feel for the flow easier, you'll want to take into consideration that actually it should be 4, then it should be A chapter 7,

then 1, 2. And so we would revise this down here at the bottom as the 1, 2, 1A, and so forth if we were going to revise it. I'm not going to do that.

By the time we go to press, the notes have been pretty much set up, and it's not a big issue. You can follow the outline as it's given and not lose your place. It's just a question of the connection to the larger piece of 7 to 16.

All right, Paul responds to the issues of sex and marriage. In 1 to 7, its marriage realities, normative and sexual, not Solomon. That's what 1 to 7 is going to tell us.

In 7b to 24, marriage, Paul's gifting is not normative for others. Paul's not trying to say he's the model. You see, there was a model that predates Paul.

It's called Genesis. The marriage mandate is given in Genesis. It's the expectation that governs creation.

And Paul comes up, and he's doing some things that are special. His ministry context is special, and he makes it crystal clear in chapter 7 that he himself is not the model, even though he wishes they could be like him. It's a functional ministry wish in light of the present distress, which flavors this whole chapter, which is probably a reference to Paul's view of eschatology.

In the second part, 7:25 to 40, Paul advises the unmarried in light of practical wisdom. The unmarried segment of the population covers a very, very large segment. It's an unmarried period, unmarried again, like a widow, unmarried in terms of a variety of questions.

And we'll see this as we move through. I didn't give you that outline here. Paul is not laying a normative demand on the readers in much of what he's saying here.

And I'm going to try to keep pounding that so that you'll get the point. There's a lot that's going on in chapter 7 that relates to a norm, and that norm is marriage and sex. It really doesn't go into the issue of children very much, but marriage and sex.

That's normative. And yet, Paul is a little bit non-normative, because at least he, whether he was married or not, we'll talk about, he appears to be single and he doesn't have the issues of caring for a family. So, therefore, as a missionary, he's free.

He wishes that everybody could give it the focus he gives it, but he understands that they cannot and does not lay a guilt trip on them at any time about that, but tells them that it is good for them to marry. Okay. He's not laying a normative demand on the readers but is advising them in light of his own wisdom.

As anyone would do. Talbot makes this comment. In this tightly organized section of 7:25-40, which is the second part of it, the apostle has taken up the question of the unmarried raised by the Corinthians in their letter and has said that theologically there's no problem with marriage, although practically there are arguments for remaining unmarried if one has desire under control.

I actually think that Paul makes it a little more specific than if one has desire under control because when he talks about the gift of not being married, it is not a choice. It's a gift. It's something that is a part of your nature.

And we will come back to that. Stanley Morrow has an article called Marriage and Divorce in the New Testament. He makes the distinct point in that article that Paul's view of celibacy is that it is a gift and that it is not a choice.

And I'm going to come back to that scenario as we move along. The second thing here is related to Paul's teaching; Garland brings up another observation. The first thing was looking at Talbot's presentation sort of outline.

Now, let's look a little bit at what Garland brings to us on page 88. Garland sees the subjects divided by an introductory verb. Instead of seeing the pride and the divisions along those lines, even though he recognizes that thoroughly, he sees subjects divided by an introductory verb, I say, I commend, or I think.

Through these markers, he outlines the chapters on sexual relations within marriage, 7:1 to 5. Celibacy or marriage for the unmarried and widows, 6 to 9. Divorce for those married to Christians and for those married to non-Christians, 7, 10 to 16. I think he's taken a little bit of liberty here with some of his terms, but we'll come back to that. D, the principle underlying the discussion, remain as you are, 17 to 24.

And E, the advisability of marriage for the betrothed for widows. So internal to chapter 7, which has been introduced by peridea, Garland comes in and looks at the way the Greek is framed, I say to you, uses a variety of vocabulary, I command you, I think. These verbs of thinking and saying outline the chapter in terms of what Garland's looking for.

Frankly, at the end of the day, it's the subject matter. And I think he sees that and he sees the verbs that introduce it, brings them together. I haven't looked at every one of those markers recently.

I've been doing this for a while, and I review some things, and I don't. And so I think it's subject matter at the end of the day. And if that fits with Garland's observation, so be it.

And internal to chapter 7, that works very well. Garland would go back to peridea for 7 to 16, as far as structure is concerned. But internal to chapter 7, which is very notorious about sections.

And when you get into this, it becomes a very big issue. Well, how do these things divide out? And we will observe that as we move on. The second bullet point is that most treat 7, 1 to 7 as a unit and maintain outlines close to the paragraphs represented in the NIV.

While the paragraphs are still helpful, deeper structures like Talbert's chiastic observations are crucial to surface meaning. Here's a typical outline that I've given you here. It's not Talbert's, it's mine.

One is the affirmation of sex and marriage, 7:1 to 7. The sanctity of marriage, 7, 8 to 16. The unmarried and widows should marry if they do not have the gift of celibacy. Marriage is permanent, 10 to 16.

The Domenico tradition in 10 and 11 is what Jesus said. The Pauline explanation is what Paul says in 7, 12 to 16. Then Paul shifts into this, remaining as you are principle with another factor in 17 to 24.

He gives advice to the unmarried, which includes widows in 25 to 35. And then E, the special issue of betrothed virgins, which is probably the most troublesome of all these categories in terms of unpacking it. And then there's another statement for the widows at the end in verses 39 and 40.

So, there you've got, when you read commentaries, you don't read words, you don't plow through, you look for information. And if you look at Talbert, you look for the information. How is chapter 7 structured? You look at Garland, how does he see chapter 7 structure? You do that with a number of commentaries, compare that, find the common denominators, and then work your way out from that point. I'd highly recommend you read Fee's commentary introduction to chapters 7 to 16.

He's got a rather sizable introduction to this third major unit of the main body of the letter in 7 to 16. It's helpful reading. Richard Hayes, I haven't said much about it, but I like his little book in the interpretation series.

He reflects on the big ideas of chapter 7, and those are helpful as well. You can't, and I just can't spell everybody here for you. Victor Wimbush, if I'm saying that correctly, has a book called Paul the Worldly Ascetic.

Interesting title. But he divides some things out here, and he gives you a little more detail than some of the others. Let's look at these.

7:1-7 has to do with married couples; not many questions about that. 7:8-9 are singles, those who have not been married. We'll talk about that when we get there.

7:10-11, married couples, both parties are believers. He says a question about divorce. The Bible doesn't use the word divorce in these texts, so we'll cover that when we come to it.

7:17-24 is a bit of a pause, a statement of general principles. Remain as you are, and we'll discuss that later. Then, back to the groups.

See, these groups could have been individual subgroups within the community of First Corinthians. We could have some of the Corinthian believers gather into every one of these categories. Man, this is getting complicated, isn't it? I mean, you can imagine, and I would like to be back in a time machine and watch the congregation, which would have been many little congregations, as this letter was read to them.

Because in that congregation, over in this corner, you've got the married couples. Over in this corner, you've got those that are married to unbelievers. Over in this corner, you've got those who were married to unbelievers, and the unbelievers departed.

Now they're there. Then, over back here, you've got the widows. Then over here, you've got whoever these virgins are.

So, you can see that this small chapter, on the one hand, covers a huge domain of subjects on the other. Down to 7:25-38, engaged parties. That's how he is referring to the virgins.

7:29-35, a little bit of an interlude, ascetic piety, where Paul has to give an explanation about that. 7:39-40, older widows in the question of remarriage. 7:40, the conclusion to older widows, and the conclusion to the chapter.

So, this chapter, in some ways, has more subjects than anything we've looked at so far, and yet it's one subject. One subject that has to do with the relationship of male, female, and marriage at all kinds of levels. Should I get married? At the level of, now that I am? At the level of, I'm married to an unbeliever? At the level of, my unbelieving husband or wife left, and here I am? To the level of being a widow, and the remarriage question there, and to the level of some special category referred to as the virgins.

So, very interesting. Number three on page 89, an overview of the biblical text on divorce. It logically fits here in one sense.

I'm going to do it at the very end of chapter 7. I want to work through the text of chapter 7, and then I'm going to come back and give you a rather thorough overview of the Bible and divorce. Okay, let's talk now about 7 chapter 7 as a whole, 1-40, and we'll start with verses 1:24. We have two sets, 1:24, and then 25-40 is the way I've ferreted it out.

If I did it all over again, I think I probably would follow something more like Wimbush's breakout or maybe Garland's breakout, so we could factor these in a little more. I've done it, I've just done it with subpoints instead of major points, and so that's the way it is. You can follow any outline you want when you get ready to do it, but it all comes out in the same place at the end of the day.

So, Paul responds to the issue of sex and marriage. Marriage realities in 1-7, normative and sexual, not celibate. Now, listen to 1-7, and I'm reading from the 2011 NIV for convenience here.

Now, the matters you wrote about, it's good for a man not to have sexual relations with a woman. The old King James translated that, it's good for a man not to touch a woman. The RSV translate that, the new RSV, it is well for a man not to touch a woman.

That is a very literal translation, very formal, and I'll point out to you later that Gordon Fee has written an entire article. He wrote it to criticize the original NIV, which said it's good for a man not to marry. That was a horrible translation that lasted for decades.

At least the 2011 has changed it, but now it's the question of it's good for a man not to have sexual relations with a woman. They took the word touch as a metaphor for sexual relations, and that can be talked about because that metaphor has got to be unpacked to figure out what the metaphor means. All right, verse 2, but since sexual immorality is occurring, now he's talked a lot about that in five and six, and we talked about it from the standpoint of the banquets primarily, but it was also occurring in relation to the temples, because sexual paramours were part of certain pagan worship settings, and there were temple prostitutes, not like back in the ancient Corinth, many years before this, but even during the time of Paul, they existed.

But since sexual immorality is occurring, each man should have sexual relations with his own wife, and each woman with her own husband. The husband should fulfill his marital duty to his wife, and likewise the wife to her husband. The wife does not have authority over her own body, but yields it to her husband.

I'm afraid a lot of men's brains stop right there, but notice what it also says, in the same way the husband does not have authority over his own body, but yields it to his wife. It's mutual interdependence in this domain. Do not deprive each other, except



perhaps by mutual consent, and only for a time, so that you may devote yourselves to prayer or to other spiritual exercises, then come together.

And that's an interesting statement I'll mention something about again, so that Satan will not tempt you because of your lack of self-control. I say this as a concession, not as a command.

In other words, and I'll come back to this later, Paul's basically saying that you can't trump sex and marriage for spiritual reasons. One spouse can't say to the other, we'd be more spiritual if we didn't have sex tonight. Paul's not giving you the opportunity to say that.

You owe it to your spouse to have a good sex life. Paul's concession is to what he just said. He's not commanding abstinence, but he's saying you might agree to do that, but it is both and not either or in that conversation.

I wish that all you were as I am, and here we have to sort of think about, well, what was Paul? It's a wish; it's not a command, but each of you has your own gift from God. One has this gift, and another has that gift. He puts it on the basis of gift, and he does not put it on the basis of choice.

You do not choose your gifts, your gifts choose you. Now, let's take through this in a little more detail. The introductory marker is in 1a, as we've already noticed, and then in 1b, the question or slogan, is it an assertion or is it a quotation, an affirmation or a slogan? It is good for a man not to touch a woman.

I'm going to use that formal rendition. If you read the article by Fee, you'll discover that it is an extremely difficult metaphor, but it's a clear metaphor that it's more than just you shouldn't have sexual relationships, even though that does come out in this category, and we'll leave it at that. And so, Paul, is it an assertion or is it a quotation, is it an affirmation or is it a slogan? If it is an assertion, it is good for a man not to touch a woman.

Then, Paul makes the statement and explains it. Did Paul say it's good for a man not to have sexual relations? If that's what he said, why did he say what he said at the end of the paragraph? I think there are a lot of reasons not to take 1c here. Second, if it is a slogan, whether framed as a statement or a question from the original audience, then it is Paul quoting the Corinthians and then responding.

I think it's a slogan, and most do. I think that's the majority opinion of this particular category. If 1c is framed as a question, and we're still under this question, what would the original question have been? Perhaps the original question would have been, is it not better for a person not to have sexual intercourse? You see, if you

want to have the original question that Paul was reframing rather than someone using a slogan against Paul, you might have it like that.

It would be a lot less volatile. In some way, Paul probably tones down the original question by using it is good, rather than the term better or necessary. There was some sort of asceticism underlying this community, and it seems to be leaking out here in the marriage situation.

This is a pure marriage, a pure couple. There's a translation for Paul, which I've mentioned to you already, with the original NIV, at least the 84, and I think it goes back a little farther. In the translation of 7:1, they said it is good for a man not to touch a woman.

They translated it as it's good for a man not to marry. That is the exact opposite of this entire chapter, and absolutely the exact opposite of verses 1 to 7. Where did that come from? But it reigned. I can't imagine how many people it misled for decades, upon decades, upon decades.

That is the very opposite of what this chapter is about. Flies in the face of Genesis and the creation mandate. Makes no sense at all.

Gordon Fee, who for some odd reason wasn't part of the committee, evidently, of the original NIV, at least not down to the end of it, when they made their final decisions, was so irate with this translation that he wrote an article that appeared in the Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society in December of 1980, which obviously the 84 is the version I had in my hand. The NIV original goes back into the 70s. And he wrote this article, 1 Corinthians 7:1 in the NIV.

And he, it's a very intricate article, very elaborate, and he just takes them to task. And frankly, they never listened. Not until the 2011 revision came along.

They should have corrected this a long time ago. But for whatever reason, they chose not to. This poor translation of the original NIV was changed in 2011 to say it is good for a man not to have sexual relations with a woman.

And once again, if you come to it as a slogan, no big deal. If you come to it as Paul framing it, then responding, that would be a little different. So, whoever gave this translation and didn't do what the RSV did, even the new RSV, and just left it, it's good for a man not to touch a woman and let the reader figure it out, which is what formal equivalency does.

It pushes you to have to figure something out, rather than figure it out for you, as here. I don't know. I don't know what's inside that.

I know some of the people who were involved, but I've never talked to them directly about it. All right. The second approach to this.

We're asking, is it an assertion or a quotation? An affirmation or a slogan? Well, I think the answer is, it's a slogan. And it's what the Corinthians are saying to Paul, and Paul has to come back and deal with that. Paul's evaluation in two through five, after the question, whether they made it or a question, assertion is another issue.

It depends on how friendly they're being or not friendly toward Paul. But nonetheless, there it is. Charles Talbert notes the chiasmic structure of two through five, and then we'll extend the description.

You can see how chiasm works the way I framed it for you here on page 90. A, but because of fornications. A prime, which is down at the bottom because of your lack of self-control.

Oftentimes, it uses the same words as in the original A. Then B, let each one of you have his own wife or husband. B prime, do not deprive one another. There's the wife and the husband.

C, let the husband fulfill his sexual obligations. C prime, likewise, the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife. Then D, likewise, the wife to her husband.

D prime, the wife does not have authority over. So, this could be a chiasm. You can see the logic of how these intertwine, start, mention, and come back, and it works to the center.

Sometimes, every one of these is a little different. If there was an E, one E in the center, then that center would become very important and controlling. We'll see this in another possible situation later.

All right. Sex and marriage is a valid activity for human need, Paul says in verse 2. It is, but since immorality is occurring, and you can define that in probably in those two ways, both the banquets and the temple. Since it's occurring, it's important to be married and for that couple to have a good sex life.

That's basically what he's saying. Paul's command to have one's own wife or husband is a euphemism for sex and assumes marriage. That is the norm.

Paul's a good Jew. Paul's not going to break from the Genesis mandate to be married, to be a husband and wife, and to have children. That was the norm.

It was the norm for Pharisees. It was the norm for Jewish teachers and for Jews themselves. It was also necessary in their time and place and culture and as cultures developed.

Today, we kind of get high-minded and think that it's not necessary anymore or that children are not necessary. I'm not going to go into how our culture is reaping some of the benefits of those decisions. Marriage at the bottom of page 90, by its very nature, promotes human interdependence.

7:3-6. This is just the facts. It's life. Paul strongly condemns sexual abstinence by marriage partners.

Paul's use of ought in verse 3 may be polemical against that community in Corinth he is saying it's better not to. In verse 3, the husband should. That's the word ought.

That's an interesting word in Greek. When you take this word over into philosophy, it's a deontological category. That means it's a necessary category.

It's not just that you should, it's that you must. You better. The husband should.

That's not an option. It's not stated to mean an option. The husband ought to fulfill his marital duty to his wife and, likewise, the wife to her husband.

Just out of curiosity, since I haven't given you a chart here, I just want to see once again what the NRSV did with that. In verse 3, the husband should, they use the same word. But in verse 3, the idea is more of this classic word *phelo*, which is the ought.

I'm just trying to let my eyes focus over there. Okay, now let's think more about this. The state of marriage gives each partner certain conjugal rights to which the other partner must acquiesce.

It's not something to be debated. If abstinence is practiced, it must be by mutual consent. No one person in the marriage relationship can call the shots on this.

It has to be mutual, and it better be friendly mutual. Sex is normative. Sex in marriage is a deontological principle.

It's interesting. I haven't known very much of this in my experience, but I did have a former student once who got married and went into that marriage expecting it to be a marriage, and it ended up not working. And for whatever reason, it went on for some time, and the marriage was never consummated with the sexual act.

This became a major problem in the marriage and for him. And he did not want to dissolve the marriage, but he wanted children, and he wanted a marriage. He didn't want to just be living with someone in a house and not have not only the privilege and the enjoyment of sex but sex for procreation.

And through the working of the elders in his church, they resolved this by working it evidently, and I wasn't there. I think they worked it through the courts for an annulment. He got an official annulment and even the courts, particularly when Roman Catholicism dominated an area like the Northeast.

I was in Pennsylvania for a while. They had the Monsignor on the news every night. In an area where Roman Catholicism dominates, annulments are not all that uncommon.

Now, when there has been no sex in the partnership at all, an annulment is relatively easy to obtain by certain religious traditions and even by civil government. And that happened. He got remarried, has kids, and everything's been hunky-dory in that regard.

So, marriage is a very important thing, but marriage isn't just for procreation. It's for the partnership of two people, and the sex act is one of the huge pieces of that partnership for both pleasure and procreation. In some of our past Christian traditions, the idea of pleasure and sex was ruled out, but it's because those particular Christian leaders were platonic rather than biblical.

Page 91 at the top. Paul's comment not to deprive in 7:5 one another of sexual release is a present imperative in a prohibition. Now, this brings us to some Greek grammar, but we have to be very careful with this because it has been abused.

Some, you'll notice I put that in italics, view this as implying that the audience is to stop depriving one another. The subgroup that's being addressed in this paragraph is depriving each other, and Paul is saying to stop it. That would be the present tense with an imperative.

See, the present tense in Greek has something to do with continuing. It can be looked at in a lot of ways under a microscope, but the basic sense is some idea of continuing. And so, to stop an imperative in the present is the idea of stopping something that's going on, as opposed to the aorist subjunctive that has to do with the idea of don't start something that's not going on.

For example, well, I'm not going to dive into a lot of that. Now, you'll read that in a lot of grammars. Now, here's the thing.

Be very careful. This is not to be taken as an absolutely necessary grammatical principle. Some grammarians, some commentaries, like a very poor set of books called Weiss word studies that you should never trust for Greek, might make the comment that this means stop, absolutely.

That's overstating the case. That is not a good use of Greek grammar. If the context means that, then it makes sense to use the present.

But there are contexts where you have an aorist subjunctive, and it should mean stop as much as don't start. And in modern Greek, that's true. Some people have talked about getting on buses where it talks about smoking or not standing when you're writing and seeing a contradiction of this principle.

So, it's not a demand in Greek grammar, but it is something that one could observe it as a present, by the way. And so, stop doing what you're doing, but you have to be very careful. Don't be dogmatic, but you can observe it.

As I've said, this view of Greek grammar is not a necessary assertion but must be sustained by the contextual implications. Whatever the case, Paul is speaking against a mindset of abstinence in the strongest terms. Perhaps the context also speaks against the negative stereotype of the Bible that sex is for procreation alone and not for pleasure.

There's a lot of that in Christianity, particularly in some of the older aspects of our tradition, particularly in the United States. Well, I'm not going to raise any groups because I am not an expert in all these groups. So, it's something that you need to think about.

Some Christian communities with an aberrant view of sexuality have tried to promote the mindset that sex is something nasty. I think in a lot of independent and Baptist churches in American culture, a lot of fathers who lived horrible lives before they became Christians spilled their own lives of lust over onto their children and created an atmosphere in which the kids were browbeaten that sex is something dirty when it's not. Sex in marriage is not dirty, and it's beautiful.

Therefore, be very careful how you use these texts. It's a common negative stereotype that sex is dirty. That's platonic.

That is not biblical. It's certainly not Christian, but it does exist and it's very deeply inset. And you may even be pastoring a church where you've run into some of this mindset.

In fact, in some churches, kids can't go swimming at the same place because girls and boys have to swim separately. Well, lust is always going to be in the world. And

frankly, you actually aggravate lust when you try to separate these kids more than you do in teaching them to be good kids in a community.

Paul's qualifications in verses 6 and 7. Let's listen to, well, I've read these to you. The concession of 7:6 reads, sorry, but I have to let my eyes focus because I have three pairs of glasses, and nothing really works. I say this as a concession.

I remember when we came on that. Not as a command. What does Paul mean when he says this? The concession of 7.6 does not refer to Paul's teaching.

The larger interpretive question is what the demonstrative pronoun this in 7:6 refers to. He says in 7:6, I say this. Well, what is this? And what's the concession to? Well, let's think about that.

Number one, the first bullet point. The concession of 7:6, some say, refers back to the marriage of 7:2. If this is true, then Paul presents marriage as a concession for the lack of self-control and a less desirable option, for example, than not being married. That's not what this, the relative pronoun this refers to.

He's not saying the concession is to marriage itself. That makes no sense. Paul's a good Jew.

Genesis makes marriage clear. The whole Jewish tradition and the biblical tradition make marriage the norm. He's not going to say something like that.

So, this does not refer to the fact of marriage. Secondly, the concession of 7:6, what does this refer to, refers back to the mutually agreed sexual abstinence of 7:5. When Paul himself said in 7:5, do not deprive each other except by mutual consent or Satan's going to raise problems between you. That's a paraphrase.

The concession of 7:6 refers back to the mutually agreed sexual abstinence of 7:5. It would be a concession because sex in marriage is the norm. In other words, what he said is that you can agree not to have sex for some purpose if you mutually agree. But now he's coming back and saying, I want you to know I said that as a concession, just as a way of arguing.

You don't have to do that. I'm glad he said that because some people would run with it, saying, well, Paul thinks it's a superior spiritual thing to be abstinent. No, Paul didn't say that and he's sensitive enough to make it very clear to us that he did not say that.

Or the concession refers forward to 7:7 where we read, I wish that all of you were as I am, but each of you has your own gift from God. He seems to be single at this point,

and the concession applies to that, that he doesn't require people to choose that. They won't be less spiritual if they choose to get married.

Looking forward, Paul's pragmatic recognition of being unmarried is his choice, but it is in no way prescriptive to anyone else. Paul is Paul, and Paul tiptoes through the tulips of this passage. And if you'll read it carefully and closely, you will see that Paul's making it absolutely clear marriage is the norm, sex is the norm, sex is good, go for it.

And then he's criticizing some other areas. He's not going to let the Corinthians say that it's good for a person not to have sexual relationships or even the severe piece of that, it would be good for a person not to marry. That is not an acceptable approach.

Winter argues that when this neuter pronoun is used with a verb of saying followed by an actual or implied pronoun, the pronoun has a forward-looking reference, and he sort of takes it to the following. I think this is one of those cases where we'd probably be wise to say that it's in a context. I think that that refers back to the concession because it's not a concession; it's just a form of conversation, and Paul's not demanding that they abstain from sex for anything.

At the same time, going on to the next part, I wish you were all like me. If he can wish that, the wish is not a command nor even an expectation. It's a pragmatic reality. It's easier to do the ministry that Paul was doing by himself.

And there are some other reasons in the context that would bring that to bear. Paul's own eschatology and his own view that Jesus could come at any moment and as a result of that, Paul doesn't want to complicate his life. So, he's not speaking for abstinence.

He's not speaking for abstinence, even for spiritual purposes. That doesn't make you more spiritual. If you want to be spiritual, pray then have sex.

That would be more spiritual. And you can pray afterwards too. Most paragraph Bibles have 7:1 to 7 as a unit.

The ESV breaks out 7:6 and 7 as a separate paragraph, thus leaving open the issue of which direction to read 7:6. You see, by using the paragraph, they took 7:6 with 7:7 rather than connecting it to 1 to 5. That is interpretive. The ESV, the English Standard Version that's become quite popular in a lot of groups, claims to be a formal translation, as literal as possible, as free as necessary as we talked about before. But I'll tell you, the more I read the ESV, the more dynamic equivalence I find in that version.



It's all a matter of the translator's interest on occasion. That would have been a dynamic aspect in deciding where the paragraph goes because that slants interpretation. You cannot do that and keep it a large paragraph and let the reader decide.

But when you break the paragraph, you've made an interpretive decision, and you have an interpretive translation on the block. Think of it any way you want. That's the bare facts of it.

The ESV breaks out 6, 7, and 6, and 7 as separate paragraphs, thus leaving open the issue of which direction to read 7, 6. It's amazing how much meaning in the Bible can rest on punctuation and paragraphs. Even if you have the same translations, punctuation, and paragraphs can slant a reader in a certain direction. If you think translation is an easy task just because you know Greek, you live in a strange world.

Everyone who does translation competently has to suspend their own views of interpretation and translate so that they don't lead the reader but let the reader make up their own minds. That is not an easy thing to achieve. Bottom of page 91.

Because of the pattern of Genesis and other household passages, it would be odd for Paul to promote a view of humanness that would contradict the primacy of marriage. Paul functionally recognizes the advantage of singleness, but he never promotes it as a norm. 7:7 conditions the milieu, that is, the context of 7: 8 to 24.

Read the terminal verses 7 and 24. Also, compare his instructions about the qualifications for a ministry leader in the pastoral epistles. In 7:7, gift and choice are subject to who you are and your life circumstances.

A gift chooses you, and you don't choose your gift. You do make choices in life, and sometimes you make them because life deals you a hand that requires you to make certain choices. In other words, I've known many students, for example, who were not married who dearly wanted to be married.

They are not claiming any gift of singleness, but it's just not working out for them. There are lots of reasons why it doesn't, and it can get extremely complicated as to why it might not work out for them. But it's in violation of their desires.

They want to be married, and so their whole life; if it doesn't work out for them providentially, this is a negative providence, then they have to deal with it. At the same time, they would like to make another choice. So, life deals with certain hands that we have to play in all kinds of ways.

And we play them from the standpoint of biblical ethics and biblical teaching. Sometimes, we have to sacrifice, and sometimes, it's extremely difficult to do so to fulfill biblical ethics. Sometimes, what we really want doesn't come our way.

Some of it could be us, our own lack of understanding of who we are and how we operate. And it wouldn't hurt to have some counseling on that score. And sometimes, it's just the circumstances of life that never work out for a person.

And I've known people in all these categories. The creation mandate and the meta-narrative of the bible call for this issue to be on the basis of a gift, not a choice. Marriage is normal.

It's an expectation of God, according to the bible. And that's the course of action that people, that would those who call themselves Christians should follow. Now you can choose not to, but don't choose it as some sort of a pious choice.

You're just choosing it for other reasons. Be honest about it. Be honest with yourself.

But it is a deviation from the norm. That's okay. Some are eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake, as Jesus said in the gospels.

But that's not a norm either. That's, that is an ambition from the norm. All right, page 92.

Does the meaning of, discuss the meaning of gift. The word gift here is the word charisma. It's not the word doron.

Doron is a word like a Christmas gift. Charisma is a gift used in the gift chapters of 12 to 14 as a spiritual endowment or some kind of an endowment that God generates with you for use in the church. First, Paul's gift language gives us another item for our list.

In other words, this isn't in any of the lists of gifts, but it's mentioned as a gift. So why not put it on the list? You see, one list doesn't make a totality of lists. You have to look at all of them.

And even then, you don't have the totality. You just have lists because lists always serve context. There is no such thing as a complete list.

And we'll talk about this later in chapters 10 through 12. Paul's gift language gives us another for our list. Since gifts are usually special endowments, marriage is probably not a gift but a norm.

So, marriage isn't a gift. It's an expectation not to be married as a gift. Garland notes that since celibacy is a special gift, it, therefore, includes three implications.

Now this is quite interesting. Page 92. The first implication.

It is not an issue of personal preference or choice or a meritorious feat of self-control, but it's a gift from God. To put it this way, it's not something you ever really think about that much. Now, you can think about it, and anybody can think about it, but it's nothing that drives you.

You have no... Lust is not something that really comes up in you that much. That's a gift. Two, as a gift, it is for a special service in the church.

It's not just so you can have more toys and freedom. In our American culture, many have chosen not to get married because they don't want the restrictions and they don't want their freedom hinged upon. They want to be able to leave anytime.

And the same thing could be said about the issue of children. White Americans have often chosen not to have children, frankly, for the reason that they want more toys. They'll say, well, we don't know that we can provide for them.

That's a cop-out. It's for selfish reasons by and large, unless there's some sort of a genetic defect that's passed on in the family, then you can have issues there. So be careful how you talk about marriage and gifts.

Third, this gift renders one non-driven for natural sexual desire and is therefore extremely unusual and hard to judge because everyone at some point has lust, has thoughts, and has hormones. And how to ferret out who has the gift and who doesn't is very difficult. But at the end of the day, it chooses you.

You don't choose it. Note how Paul discusses this issue. He does not exhort individuals to find God's will about the matter of marriage or celibacy.

Let me say that again. There is no language in this text to do God's will, to find God's will. Well, the reason it isn't there is because it wouldn't be appropriate to be there because God's will is that you get married.

That's the teaching of scripture. There's probably nothing more abused than this idea of God's will. I have a book on that.

Hope to do a series of lectures in the same setting. But at this point, you'll have to get the book. You can get it from Lagos, Decision-Making God's Way.

Just put my name in. It'll come up in English and Spanish. How Paul, note how Paul discusses this issue.

He does not exhort individuals to find God's will about the matter of marriage or celibacy. Those are already established. It is a norm to marry.

In fact, add to marry there in the sentence. It is a norm, add to marry. Or a gift for some not to marry.

And the gift, that is the freedom from sexual need, is not salt, but is a special endowment. God's sovereign will is discerned in the normal course of life. So, there are no illusions about a subjective process to decide whether you're going to live burning with passion because of some self-imposed and assumed calling.

You weren't called to do that. If you burn, you ain't called to celibacy. You're called to marriage.

Now, if you experience negative providence in your life, and in a fallen world, there's plenty of negative providence. And in spite of how much you want to be married, it doesn't happen. Do not say, well, I must have the gift of celibacy, because you don't.

Say, in God's providence, for whatever reasons, be it me, be it my circumstances, it hasn't come about. And I'm going to have to live with that. I'm going to have to rise to the challenges that come with not being married.

Until the day comes that perhaps God graces me with a husband or with a wife. I have a good friend, a very good friend, who went to the altar in his 20s, and his bride-to-be didn't show up. And I don't know if that's the trigger, but he was never able to make the decision to marry, even though he had many opportunities in life.

He was a good guy. He was talented. He was a minister.

There were several women who were proposing to him and couldn't get him to go along. But at, I think, about 60 years of age, he finally got married. Now, he and I had a lot of jokes about certain things and the struggles that he had, and we would tease about those things, but I'm sure that was a very difficult journey.

And now, in God's own time, for whatever reasons, and fallen worlds have to be factored into this, things are not the way they were originally designed to be. Now, he's enjoying the joys of that relationship in his later years. That's great.

So, if you burn, you ain't called to celibacy. Think about how fall theology factors into the problem of decisions about marriage and the problem decisions about children.

For example, sometimes we make decisions about life, and sometimes life makes decisions about us, and we all have to deal with it in our own ways.

Life circumstances can make decisions for us, even when we don't want that decision. Well, that's enough for this segment. On page 92 at 2a, we will pick up in our next lecture.

Have a good day.

This is Dr. Gary Meadors in his teaching on the book of 1 Corinthians. This is session 18, 1 Corinthians 7:1-7a, Paul's Response to Issues of Sex and Marriage.