

1 Spending Time with Jesus in I Corinthians Chapter 7

Invite Jesus to speak to you as you read this week.

1st: read I or II Corinthians (read the one you didn't read last week) all the way through, the whole book, imagining you are Paul saying this to the church in Corinth. To help you remember and ENJOY what you are reading, read out loud for at least 15 minutes each time (longer would be even better.)

2nd: read chapter 7 by itself to remember what they are about.

3rd: read chapter 7 again and write down what stands out to you.

What do you notice?

1)

2)

3)

Third read through, answer questions as you go:

I Corinthians 7:1-7

Look up Genesis 1:27 and 31. How did God create mankind? In His _____, in the _____ of _____ He created them; _____ and _____ He created them.

At the end of that 6th day when God looked at all that He had made, including humanity - as male and female, how good was it in His eyes? _____.

Look up Genesis 2:7. The LORD God is being an artist. Can you imagine His attention to detail as He designs every single part of the man to reflect God's love and life and goodness into the world? Ask the Holy Spirit to help you see how amazingly He created you and all humanity. Instead of "formed" in Gen 1:27, what verb(s) could you use? _____

Jump to Genesis 2:20-25. This is the first wedding. The language in this story showed the original readers that God made the woman to be the equal ally and partner for the man. God made this "very

good” creation of humanity into two (a male and a female) so that they can become one. Becoming one is a huge concept. In another letter, Paul calls it a mystery...in other words, a part of God’s plan to reveal Himself into the world as He rescues all who will believe in Jesus. And yes, sexual union is a big part of “being one.”

Fast forward to I Corinthians. The culture in Corinth had lots of ideas about marriage, and God’s plan for marriage was radically different from what they had always been taught. We talked about some of those ideas in chapter 6.

In I Corinthians 7:1, why is “It is good for a man not to have sexual relations with a woman” in quotes? Who is Paul quoting? _____

Some of them think that if a man denies himself from having sex, even with his own wife, he will become even more spiritual and wise. Paul could have talked about God’s creation of sex back in Genesis. Instead he gives a commonsense answer. He says that a man should have sexual relations with his _____ wife and each woman with her _____ husband...since sexual _____ is occurring (even in the church). Remind me...what problems is he talking about? (See ch. 5 &6)

Verse 3 would be shocking. Paul STARTS off by saying that the husband has a marital duty that he owes his wife, and then he says “likewise a woman to her husband.” Back then, marriages were arranged by the groom’s and bride’s families – often ten or more years before the wedding. Very, very few women were rich enough to care for themselves like women in America today. Most women had no rights or honor of their own. Their fathers took care of all their needs until they married, then their husbands took care of them. When their husbands died, their sons would care for them.

A girl was married at about 12 years of age. So, yes, all you girls in this Bible study would be married if you lived in 1st century Corinth. Men were older when they married. People didn’t live long then, so a woman could easily become a widow by the time she was 25.

Knowing all that, how important would it be for a woman to have sons? _____

Do you see why Paul would say a husband has a duty to have sex with his wife?

What does “yields authority over” one’s body mean in verse 4?

Why does Paul say that both the husband and the wife yield authority of their bodies to each other?

What does “mutual consent” mean? _____ Do you think the Corinthians would be surprised at Paul saying this consent must be mutual? Why?

In v. 5 Paul mentions that Satan would take advantage of a husband and wife who did not come together regularly. The enemy would guess that their self-control was weak and tempt them.

Is being tempted the same as sinning? (Hint: look up I Cor 10:13 and Hebrews 4:14-16)

What is Paul referring to in v. 7 when he says, “I wish that all of you were as I am”? (hint: v. 8)

Does it surprise you that Paul thinks of this as a gift from God? _____ Why might he think that? (v. 32.)

I Corinthians 7:8-24

Paul summarizes this whole section with v. 24: “Brothers and sisters, _____ person, as responsible to God, should _____ in the _____ they were in when God _____ them.

What is Paul referring to when he says, “when God called them”? Called them to _____

List 4 situations Paul mentions in this section and what he says to do to “stay in that situation”:

Situation	Staying in this situation would look like
example: unmarried or widowed (vv. 8-9)	Stay unmarried OR marry

I Corinthians 7:25-40

Paul mentions a “present crisis” in v. 26. According to N.T. Wright, just after Paul left Corinth, there was a horrible famine of grain throughout the Roman empire that lasted a few years. Grain was the

most basic food staple, so this was a huge crisis, especially for the poor...and most Corinthians were poor. They would not have been getting enough calories they needed to function. Would life ever return to normal?

This is the background for Paul's advice to the virgins. Sure, their parents would have been planning their weddings for ten or more years, but is it wise to marry now? The bride and groom barely have enough to eat as it is – how would they afford to feed any children?

Still there would be so much pressure to marry. Rome wanted its citizens to have lots of babies, especially boys that would become soldiers. Parents want their sons married and a grandson on the way as soon as possible. Teenage girls' fathers want their daughters settled soon because life is so short. If you are a teenage girl and not married, you will definitely feel like you are the only one.

Paul is on the side of those who would like to wait...or to not marry at all. His heart is breaking for the children who go to bed hungry, the widow whose husband died because his hunger led to an accident on the job, the widower whose wife died in childbirth because she was malnourished. No one's life is going as planned. Paul points out that the church lives differently in crisis because believers know that this _____ in its present form is _____ (v. 31.)

And at this point, Paul believes that the Lord will come back in his lifetime. He couldn't have imagined that God would be so patient...2000 years of patience...wanting everyone to come to repentance.

What do you think the "Lord's affairs" might be when a famine is happening? How would Jesus want His church, the members of His body, to respond? Would it include something like vv. 29-31?

But now, think about the engaged couple who were SO close to their wedding day. For a year, they have been counting the days and hours to their wedding. Now there's no food for a feast, but she has a new-ish dress. He has found a place they can live. They are tired of always being chaperoned...never free to be alone together. In Corinth, the groom makes all the wedding plans. Should he finish making preparations? Is his desire for his soon-to-be-bride wrong?

What about the engaged couple whose parents are pushing them together? What if they just want to wait until the famine ends? If this groom chooses to not make any more wedding plans, is he sinning?

What does it mean in v. 39 for someone to "belong to the Lord"?

If a Christian woman's husband dies and she wants to remarry, why **must** her future husband belong to the Lord?