

1st Corinthians Chapter 7 – John Karmelich

1. My title for this lesson is, “Bloom where you are planted and plant where you are blooming”.
 - a) First, understand this title has nothing to do with flowers or gardening. ☺
 - b) This expression is used in Christianity to say in effect, “Grow as a Christian where you are (physically) right now and make a difference for Christ “right where you are”.
 - c) Grant it, some people are called to “move around” and be missionaries. Some people after they get saved are in job situations that require change. But for the most part, God does not call us to “move around” once we are saved. God wants us to work with us right where we are and make a difference to the world around us.
 - d) Here’s where the chapter title gets interesting: Chapter 7 is mainly on the topic of marriage, singleness and living for Christ. What does that have to do with “blooming”?
 - i) The essentially idea is Paul is saying we don’t have to change our marital status once we become a Christian. If we become a Christian and our spouse is not saved, Paul is saying we should stay married (for one reason) as to win over the spouse and children. If we are single and desire to be married, there is nothing wrong with getting married. If we are married, sex within the context of marriage is acceptable.
 - ii) Remember the city of Corinth was known for prostitution. Due to that background, the Christians of this town were wondering about the issues of sex and marriage. Some were thinking sex even within Christian marriage is bad. Some were thinking that when one gets saved, they have to divorce their wives. Some were thinking they couldn't get married due to their faith in Jesus.
 - iii) This chapter is designed to set the record straight about marriage and Christians. Remember that marriage between a man and a woman was ordained in the Garden of Eden. The concept of marriage pre-dates any sort of concept of an organized worship of God. Paul lays out the biblical principals of marriage in this chapter. The idea as it relates to the title comes back to “bloom where you are planted and plant where you are blooming”. In other words, if God called you and me while we are married, and in most cases stay married and use that for God’s glory. If God calls you and me while we are single, one can either stay single or get married. Either way, one is still glorifying God in their life and being a good witness to those around us.
 - iv) As long as one understands the classical definition of marriage and the role of sex within marriage, one can be a good witness for Christ whether single or married.
 - v) With that said, we can start the chapter!
2. Chapter 7, Verse 1: Now for the matters you wrote about: It is good for a man not to marry.
 - a) This verse makes a nice “break” in the book of 1st Corinthians to date. Everything we’ve read in this book up to this verse has to do with issues Paul himself wanted to address.
 - i) From Verse 1 of Chapter 7 onward, Paul is now addressing questions brought to him. Apparently there was a letter from the Corinth church to Paul. The purpose of 1st Corinthians from this verse, to pretty much the end of the letter is Paul giving responses to the questions brought up by the church.
 - b) The first issue Paul brings up is “Christians and marriage”. If you read Verse 1 out of context of the next few verses, it reads like Paul is anti-marriage.
 - c) Paul’s point here is that if one can live without the desire to be married (i.e., choose to live a celibate lifestyle) it is better in that one can then focus his or her life solely on living for God and living to make a difference for God in all that one does. When one is married, one has to also care about pleasing one’s spouse and one’s children. Not that these things are contrary to God’s plans for our lives, but it does add to the things we care about!

3. Verse 2: But since there is so much immorality, each man should have his own wife, and each woman her own husband. ³ The husband should fulfill his marital duty to his wife, and likewise the wife to her husband.
 - a) Verse 2 starts by saying, "Since there is so much immorality".
 - i) The first application of that phrase is that it only applies to life in Corinth at that time. The point is since there is so much prostitution in this location; it is "safer" for a man and woman to be married. That way, Christians can satisfy their sexual lust on each other and have less temptation to the world around them.
 - ii) The bigger application is that God created men and women with a need for sex. Let's face it, if it weren't for that need, there would be no children in the world. The reason God gave us such a strong sexual desire is so we would have the desire to have children. Yes, sex is meant to be enjoyed within the context of marriage, but the sexual drive was primarily created for the need to reproduce.
 - b) Paul's point here is that some people have the ability to ignore that sexual need and just focus their life on God. Most people can't ignore that need, and due to that need, it is better for Christians to get married and "fulfill his or her marital duty". In other words, enjoy sex in the context of marriage.
4. Verse 4: The wife's body does not belong to her alone but also to her husband. In the same way, the husband's body does not belong to him alone but also to his wife.
 - a) The issue of the moment is about not depriving one's spouse sexually. Some Christians wrongly thought that sex even within the context of marriage was somehow sinful. Paul is straightening out that point in this paragraph.
 - b) Some might argue, "What does Paul know about marriage?" Most likely Paul was married at one time. The book of Acts indicates that Paul was a member of the Sanhedrin. This was the group that put Stephen to death in Acts Chapter 7 for Stephen's belief in Jesus. The Sanhedrin were a large group of Jewish elders that met together to decide legal cases regarding the Jewish law. The point here is that one of the requirements to be on the Sanhedrin is to be married. That is why most scholars argue Paul was married at one time. Maybe when Paul got saved, his wife left him or maybe she died. The bible is quiet on that issue. The point is Paul most likely had some experience at marriage.
 - i) Another clue as to Paul's previous marital status is that Paul said he was "blameless in keeping the law" in Philippians 3:6. Well, it was required in the Jewish tradition that Jewish men were to be married by a certain age!
 - c) This leads us back to the text of these verses: Paul says the husband's body belongs to the wife and the wife's body, belongs to the husband. What does that mean? It means the husband is not to deny sexual pleasure to the wife and the wife is not to deny sexual pleasure to the husband. Since the two spouses are to be interconnected in their marriage, the idea is that neither spouse is to sexually deny their partner's needs for sex.
5. Verse 5: Do not deprive each other except by mutual consent and for a time, so that you may devote yourselves to prayer. Then come together again so that Satan will not tempt you because of your lack of self-control. ⁶ I say this as a concession, not as a command.
 - a) The essential idea is the husband and wife are not to deprive each other except by mutual consent to devote one's self to prayer. How long should a couple deprive themselves? The simple answer is as long as they both agree to it. Remember the husband's body belongs to the wife and wife's body belongs to the husband, therefore, they come together again when one is ready, not both.
 - b) The next sentence talks about "Satan tempting us due to a lack of self-control".
 - i) Let's say a good looking man or woman comes our way and it is a temptation for us. Let's face it; the temptation would be less if we are having regular sexual encounters with our spouse. Do you think it is just a coincidence that all of a sudden, a third-person, who is sexually attractive is now on the scene?

- ii) Can one be having regular sex with one's spouse and still be tempted? Yes, the point is the temptation is less if one is regularly focusing on pleasing one's spouse!
 - c) One of the great secrets to happiness is learning to please others, that brings happiness to ourselves. If we try to make ourselves happy first, that always leaves us desiring more!
 - i) The point is if the married man is trying to make his wife happy sexually, it will lead to his own sexual happiness and vice-versa.
 - ii) If a married man or woman is telling their spouse, "I need you to please me sexually, one is focusing on oneself and it leaves us empty. If one focuses on trying to please one's spouse, it will lead to one's own sexual happiness.
 - iii) One can apply that principal to other aspects of our lives as well. If we live to please God, we end up pleasing ourselves far more than if we just live to please our own desires. Remember God still wants to use us right where we are. The point is we have God in mind when we make decisions in life and that in turn affects our own happiness.
 - d) Verse 6 then says, "I say this as a concession, not as a command."
 - i) Apparently Paul knew the difference between giving a God-ordained command to people and his own opinion on things. Every now and then in Paul's letters he will comment on something as being his own opinion on the matter.
 - ii) Paul's point is that if one is married, the idea of living to please one's spouse is the "ideal" marriage. Lord knows, I am far from perfect on this concept. ☺ The point is a healthy marriage is one where both spouses are doing their best to please each other as a priority over pleasing themselves. When that happens, it leads both spouses into a closer relationship with God and with each other.
 - iii) Paul's other point is that marriage is not a requirement for all Christians, but it is an acceptable lifestyle to be chosen. This will become clearer in the next verse.
6. Verse 7: I wish that all men were as I am. But each man has his own gift from God; one has this gift, another has that.
- a) When Paul says, "I wish that all men were as I am", Paul is referring to the spiritual gift of celibacy. Paul had the ability to ignore his sexual needs so that he could fully focus his life on pleasing God. Paul understood that most men don't have that gift, but Paul also thought that if all men had that gift, there would be more time to focus one's life on God!
 - i) Remember that Paul is not anti-marriage. Paul understood that the future of the human race depends upon reproduction.
 - ii) Paul is just "appreciating" his gift to be celibate and wishes others had that gift.
 - iii) I have noticed as Christians that people like to hang around with other Christians that have the same spiritual gifts. For examples, teachers appreciate other Christian teachers and like to be in churches that emphasize teaching. Other Christians have great gifts of singing and often like to be in churches that have a great music ministry. My point here is that Paul "enjoys" his gift of celibacy and I believe he wishes more had that gift as well.
7. Verse 8: Now to the unmarried and the widows I say: It is good for them to stay unmarried, as I am.⁹ But if they cannot control themselves, they should marry, for it is better to marry than to burn with passion.
- a) Paul is stating to the unmarried and the widows, it is better to be a Christian in an unmarried state only in that one can dedicate more time to serving God than when one is married. When one is married, one has to dedicate part of one's time to making one's spouse happy and one's children happy. There is nothing wrong with making one's spouse happy. The point is simply one has less time for God.
 - b) A mistake single people make is, "I'll wait until I get married, and then I'll focus my life on serving God". Then when they get married, they come up with a new excuse on what they have to wait for, before serving God. The point is there is always an excuse.

- c) The second point of these two verses is that a “person cannot control themselves”, i.e., they have a lot of sexual desire within them, then they should marry. The last sentence says it best, “It is better to marry than to burn with passion”.
 - i) Remember that Paul is not condemning the concept of marriage. Paul’s key point in these verses is that if one is single, one has more time to dedicate to serving God than if one is married. Still, if one has strong sexual urges, there is nothing unbiblical about getting married to deal with those urges.
8. Verse 10: To the married I give this command (not I, but the Lord): A wife must not separate from her husband. ¹¹ But if she does, she must remain unmarried or else be reconciled to her husband. And a husband must not divorce his wife.
- a) Verses 10 and 11 are written to the married Christian who is considering divorce.
 - b) Notice in Verse 10 it says, (not I, but the Lord). This is not Paul’s own personal opinion. This is based on divine revelation and/or based on Paul’s study of scripture.
 - c) The key point is that a Christian man or woman is not to divorce for any reason other than adultery. Jesus himself stated that divorce is not permitted except in cases where one party commits adultery. Although the adultery exception is not stated in these two verses, Paul is not arguing against what Jesus taught. (See Matthew 19:3-9).
 - d) Let me try to think of an example where a Christian is considering divorce: Let’s suppose the spouse is an alcoholic or physically abusive in some shape or form. Paul is clearly teaching that it is ok to be separate from the spouse, but not divorced.
 - i) Let’s suppose one is a Christian, and one is at a point where one wants to divorce their spouse due to “non-reconcilable differences”. The bible is saying it is wrong. Let’s say one has prayed and prayed about it, and gone through lots of counseling. Separation is permitted but not divorce.
 - ii) The point is God considers marriage sacred. A marriage before the eyes of God is different than what the courts say. Many a Christian has married a non-Christian and is miserable because of that relationship. Still, if the spouse is willing to stay married, the Christian should also stay, and that topic is coming up in the next set of verses.
 - e) What these verses also imply is that one can be legally divorced as far as the civil courts are concerned, but not divorced as far as God is concerned. For a Christian to get remarried in such situations would be like having an adulterous affair whether they realize it or not.
 - f) Why was Paul stating this principal? There were probably Christians in Corinth at that time who thought that sex, even within the context of marriage was bad and it is better to be divorced. Paul is arguing against that view and is saying it is not biblical.
9. Verse 12: To the rest I say this (I, not the Lord): If any brother has a wife who is not a believer and she is willing to live with him, he must not divorce her. ¹³ And if a woman has a husband who is not a believer and he is willing to live with her, she must not divorce him. ¹⁴ For the unbelieving husband has been sanctified through his wife, and the unbelieving wife has been sanctified through her believing husband. Otherwise your children would be unclean, but as it is, they are holy.
- a) Verse 12 has the phrase (I, not the Lord). In other words, Paul is stating that this is his best opinion based on prayer and his own study of God’s word, but not from any sort of divine revelation.
 - b) These three verses are saying in effect that if one is a Christian and the spouse is not, if the one who is not a Christian is willing to stay married to the Christian, the Christian spouse is not to divorce the non-Christian spouse just because he or she is not a believer.
 - i) Think of it this way: Let’s suppose a couple is married. One of the two people hear the gospel message and gets saved. The Christians in Corinthians were wondering if that person should stay married. Paul is saying yes.

- c) In Verse 14, we have the term “sanctified” being used. That word, as it is used in the bible, refers to one who is set apart for God’s use. When we are saved, our body, soul and spirit now belong to God. We are set apart for God’s use. Our job is to live for Him, and not live for ourselves.
- i) Given all of that, Verse 14 says the unbelieving husband or wife is sanctified by the believing spouse. This does not mean the unbelieving spouse is saved. That would be contradictory to the Gospel message of individual salvation.
 - ii) What it does mean is that God recognizes the marriage and sets apart that family structure as being “set apart” for His use.
 - iii) Throughout history there have been lots of stories of children or grandchildren who have been saved due the witness of the believing parent or grandparent. Even though there are other members of the household who are unsaved, the children or grandchildren can see how the Christian has lived differently and how their different lives are being a good witness. This is how the family is “set apart” for God’s use even though there is an unsaved spouse that is part of this family.
- d) The last line says, “Otherwise your children would be unclean”.
- i) There is a principal in the bible that children are saved until they reach an age of accountability on their own. (Romans 7:8-9). Once the children are old enough to understand individual accountability, their salvation is now “up to them”.
 - ii) There is no set age of accountability. It is different for every child and is based on their upbringing and understanding. The point is there is some age at which a child, brought up in a home with at least one Christian parent is no longer saved just because they came from a Christian “set apart” home.
 - iii) What about children that were not raised in a Christian home? Here is a situation where I am convinced a “fair” God will judge all people “fairly”. The point of these verses is that there is something “special” about children who were raised in a home where at least one parent or possibly grandparent was saved. That home is “set apart” for God. The Christian in that home has the opportunity to be a witness to the non-Christians living in that home. That is what Paul means when he said the home is “set apart” for the sake of the believer.
- e) This leads back to my lesson theme of “bloom where you are planted and plant where you bloom”. If one is in a marriage and one gets saved. God may be calling you to be a witness to the unsaved members of one’s family and one’s children. Since that marriage is “set apart” by God, He may want you, (the saved one) to “bloom” to those around you. It may take a lifetime to see the “blooming”, but the eternal benefits are worth it.
- i) The point is one does not tell their spouse and children, “OK, I’m saved now. I’m going to give you five minutes to join me, or else I’m out of here.” Your spouse and children have seen you live a long life without God, and they are going to need to see the change within you in order to make a difference in their life.
 - ii) Even if one’s spouse does not change (and that spouse still wants to live with you), one is still an influence to the children and even the grandchildren. One has to remember that marriage is set apart by God, and He has some eternal purpose for us to keep that marriage holy despite the unbelieving spouse. (I thank God my spouse is a strong believer and I personally don’t have this issue.)
 - iii) I should also add a line about those who got divorced prior to being saved. One “starts new” the moment one is saved. If one desires to go back to the old relationship, one has to work that out with the ex-spouse. Christians are not called to marry non-Christians and that is a related issue. My point here is God can and does work with us, wherever we are at the point we get saved.

10. Verse 15: But if the unbeliever leaves, let him do so. A believing man or woman is not bound in such circumstances; God has called us to live in peace.¹⁶ How do you know, wife, whether you will save your husband? Or, how do you know, husband, whether you will save your wife?
- a) Paul gets “practical” in Verse 15. Paul is well aware that a nonbeliever will often just leave the relationship after the believing spouse gets saved. This is probably what happened to Paul's wife. The non-believing spouse may not want to put up with the different lifestyle and just leave.
 - b) Paul's point here is if the spouse leaves, the Christian half the relationship is not bound. They can “live in peace” if the non-believing spouse decides on his or her own to get divorced. The Christian is not bound if the non-believing spouse decides to divorce the believer.
 - c) The underlying idea is the Christian in the relationship is not to seek divorce as the Christian has the life-long opportunity to win over the nonbeliever as long as that nonbeliever is willing to stay in the relationship. At the same time, if the nonbeliever files for divorce, the Christian is not guilty in this situation.
 - d) Why would a nonbeliever want to leave? I have watched situations where a non-believing spouse wants to go out drinking every night or has no interest in going to church. Remember that we can't read people's minds, we can only judge their actions. For what it is worth, God does not call Christians to “abuse” their non-Christian spouses in order to encourage them to leave. If anything, God wants us to be good witnesses to everyone around us, including our families. It is about winning people over for Christ.
 - i) Still, Paul understands that sometimes spouses leave and that's the underlying point of these two verses.
 - e) I don't believe Paul is encouraging divorce. If anything, Paul is trying to preserve the marriage. The last two sentences say in effect the behavior of the believer may win over the hearts of the nonbeliever. The sentences say the believing spouse may save the non-believing spouse. It is important to state that only God saves individuals. Still, God uses us to reach nonbelievers. Since our spouses are close to us, God may use us to reach those spouses. The same principle applies to reaching our children and grandchildren.
11. Verse 17: Nevertheless, each one should retain the place in life that the Lord assigned to him and to which God has called him. This is the rule I lay down in all the churches.
- a) From Verses 17-24, Paul is going to move on to a related topic. Paul's point is that we should not change our situations just because we are saved.
 - b) This gets back to the concept of “Bloom where you are planted and plant where you bloom”. When some Christians are saved, God will call them into a special ministry that requires a lot of travel and change. If one is living or working in an ungodly situation, that too, requires change. For the most part, when we get saved, God still wants us to be a living witness in the situation we currently exist.
 - i) This ties to the last set of verses. The idea is that if one gets saved and is still married, one should stay in that marriage as to possibly win over the unbelieving spouse. If the spouse leaves on his or her own, that is a separate issue. That point is God wants us to be a good witness right where we “are” in life.
 - ii) One of the biggest mistakes I have watched Christians make is to ignore their own family for the “Gospel's sake”. They feel lead to do some sort of ministry to the point of ignoring being a witness to their own family around them! One of the great “challenges” in life is learning to balance one's personal and family life with whatever other missionary endeavors God has called us to do. If one is working so hard at saving others that one is “losing” one's own family, then one has lost the proper balance and perspective in life!

12. Verse 18: Was a man already circumcised when he was called? He should not become uncircumcised. Was a man uncircumcised when he was called? He should not be circumcised.¹⁹ Circumcision is nothing and uncircumcision is nothing. Keeping God's commands is what counts.
- a) In Verses 17-24, Paul is expanding upon the idea of "being a good witness" to issues outside of marriage. The topic of being a good witness for God has not changed. What changes beginning in Verse 17 is situation examples. We are no longer talking about being a good witness in a marriage situation. We are now talking about being a good witness in whatever situation we are "in" in life.
 - b) Verses 18-19 talk about "circumcision". For a Jewish boy, in order to be accepted into Judaism, one has to be physically circumcised.
 - i) Notice Verse 18 says, "He should not become uncircumcised." We'll here's the issue, one has cut off the foreskin, it does not grow back. Therefore, Paul cannot be talking about literally being uncircumcised again. ☺
 - c) The point of these verses is that Paul is saying, "If one is saved while living a Jewish lifestyle, one does not have to change that lifestyle. If one is saved while living a non-Jewish (Gentile) lifestyle, one does not have to change it. What does matter is that one keep's God's commands for one's life.
 - i) This gets back to the idea of "bloom where one is planted". If one becomes a Christian in a Jewish-household or Jewish community, one should not change that lifestyle other than to live for Jesus and obey God's commands for one's life.
 - a) Paul's focus is he wants us to be a good witness to those around us.
 - ii) What Paul is talking about is the "customs" of that lifestyle. One does not have to dramatically alter one's lifestyle other than what is commanded by God.
 - iii) For example, in a religious Jewish home, one eats a certain way. While one is not bound by that set of laws as a Christian, but if one chooses to still eat that way, one can. Paul's point is we don't have to change lifestyles based on salvation, other than the obvious issues of doing things that are pleasing to God.
13. Verse 20: Each one should remain in the situation which he was in when God called him.²¹ Were you a slave when you were called? Don't let it trouble you--although if you can gain your freedom, do so.²² For he who was a slave when he was called by the Lord is the Lord's freedman; similarly, he who was a free man when he was called is Christ's slave.²³ You were bought at a price; do not become slaves of men.²⁴ Brothers, each man, as responsible to God, should remain in the situation God called him to.
- a) The concept of salvation is an "internal", personal thing. The idea of Christianity is one changes from the inside out, and then one is a witness to the world around them. Can one be a Christian in a communist country? Yes. Can one be a Christian in places where Christians are persecuted? Yes, despite the fact it is unpleasant.
 - b) When we become Christians, we become free of the requirements of the law. At the same time, we become "slaves" to God and His requirements for our lives. We as Christians are free to do anything we want, however we should want to live a life pleasing to God in all that we do!
 - c) Does this mean we should never try to improve our situation in life? No. In fact Paul says in Verse 21, "If one is a slave...if you can gain your freedom, do so". At the time of this letter, roughly half the known world was slaves.
 - i) Many slaves were educated and had lots of privileges. At the same time, they were still the property of their owners and did not have full human rights. The Roman government set up a system where a slave could make a little extra money on their own, so they could eventually buy their freedom. It was an incentive program to stay loyal to their masters. With that said, Paul is encouraging slaves to become free if they can do so (without running away).

- d) In the Christian world there is the “individual salvation gospel message” and the “social gospel message”. The latter is about changing the world around us.
 - i) Paul’s purpose in preaching the gospel is for people to have freedom from within. The freedom Paul preached is not about changing the world around us, but about having peace within us, despite whatever situation we are in, in life.
 - ii) At the same time, if one has that internal peace, one can work to make the world around us a better place to live. There is nothing unbiblical about trying to make the world a better place, as long as one understands that the sense of “peace” first comes from within.
 - a) For example, if a group of Christians is working to bring an end to slavery, or bring an end to group prejudice, that is an acceptable task, as long as one understands that freedom begins from within and then one can work on trying to make the world around us a better place to live!
 - e) This leads back to the text. Verse 23 says, “You were bought at a price; do not become slaves of men.”
 - i) Our jobs as Christians are to serve God, and not humans. If one is working for a social cause, and the leaders want you and me to serve those leaders at the point of ignoring what God wants for our lives, we are becoming slaves of men.
 - ii) Paul understood that most Christians who got saved during that time era would remain as slaves. Verse 24 discusses that point. So how do we avoid being “slaves to men” while at the same time, still being a slave? Paul’s first point is that one should not run away from that situation just because one is a slave. Paul is not calling for anarchy in that regard. Paul is discussing the idea of the danger of giving up one’s beliefs in order to make one’s master happy.
14. Verse 25: Now about virgins: I have no command from the Lord, but I give a judgment as one who by the Lord's mercy is trustworthy. ²⁶ Because of the present crisis, I think that it is good for you to remain as you are. ²⁷ Are you married? Do not seek a divorce. Are you unmarried? Do not look for a wife. ²⁸ 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 this.
- a) Paul continues his discussion of marriage, but now focuses on the “upcoming danger”.
 - b) Paul’s first discusses “virgins”. This is referring to girls who have never been married. His first point is as stated in Verse 15 that he is giving his own opinion on the matter.
 - c) One has to remember that in most ancient cultures, including the Greeks, the father’s job was to arrange a marriage for his daughters. As the father of two girls, I approve. ☺
 - d) With all that said, Paul sensed there was “trouble coming” just for being a Christian. Historically speaking, this letter was written a few years before massive persecution began against Christians. In less than 10 years, Nero would be the emperor of Rome. Among Nero’s sins, is that he burned Rome (as he wanted to rebuild it later) and blamed the Christians for the fire. The main reason the Roman leaders didn’t like Christianity was that their belief in one-God went against the Roman concept of multiple deities. The fact that Christians denied the existence of the multitudes of gods and denied the emperor as a God made the Christians targets of persecution. Do I also believe Satan was behind the persecution, of course, but these are the “excuses” for the persecution.
 - e) I state all of this, because I believe that was Paul’s point. Paul had already suffered some persecution as a Christian and Paul knew it was going to be more widespread. Because of that fear of persecution, Paul was saying to the Corinthian church that it is better to be unmarried, if for no other reason, then all Christian’s lives would be in danger.
 - i) If one’s life is in danger for being a Christian, it is better to be single, if for no other reason, then one can flee easier without having to worry about one’s spouse and one’s children while running for one’s life.

- f) At the same time, Paul is saying in these verses that if one is married, one should not seek to get divorced because of persecution. If one is single, Paul was trying to spare the church of the danger that was coming. Paul is not anti-marriage. Paul just knew of the upcoming danger and was trying to spare the Christians from having an extra burden during this time period.
 - g) OK, how does this apply today? For starters, more Christians have been killed for their faith in the last one hundred years than probably any century in previous history.
 - h) Since my audience is mostly Americans, I should state that just because we have been spared persecution in the past, does not mean it could happen in the near future. At the same time, we need to pray for Christians around the world that have their life in danger just for believing in Jesus. (See 2nd Timothy 3:12).
 - i) One of my favorite expressions is, "If you don't believe Satan is real, try opposing him for a while". If one is making a difference for Christ by showing love to the fellow Christian and being a witness to the nonbeliever, Paul promises that all Christians will face some sort of persecution. It may not be the life and death struggle of the ancient Roman world, but it will happen!
 - ii) That is also why part of my daily prayer is protection for myself and my family!
 - i) One thing "hidden" in this text is the concept that Paul does not expect Christians to just "sit there" and let themselves be persecuted. What Paul is implying is that the time is coming when one has to run for their lives. It is better to be single only in that it is less of a burden when one is running for one's life. Still, that is no excuse to divorce and if one desires to marry another Christian, it is not a sin.
 - j) Paul continues this thought in Verse 29:
15. Verse 29: What I mean, brothers, is that the time is short. From now on those who have wives should live as if they had none;³⁰ 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;³¹ those who use the things of the world, as if not engrossed in them. For this world in its present form is passing away.
- a) Paul is mainly talking about the danger of being persecuted. By the time one gets to Verse 31, Paul expands upon that concept to say in effect, we should have a "light touch" on this world, as our time is short.
 - b) Let's put it this way: How long do you plan on living? If one says eighty, ninety or one hundred years, how long is that in comparison to eternity? The one thing we don't know in life is how long we are going to live. One should live for God in all that one does. Our eternal life is going to be forever.
 - i) The reason I get into all of that is because Verse 31 says, "This world in its present form is passing away". This means Jesus will return one day and set up His kingdom. I believe Paul had the point in mind that Jesus could return at any time. Christians today should hold the view that Jesus could return at any time. What is more "short term" is the realization that our time on earth is relatively nothing in comparison to eternity. We don't know when our life will end, so the best thing we can do is live our lives for Jesus in all that we do!
 - c) With all of that said, I want to go back up to Verse 29. The verses start by saying that "Those who are have wives should live as if they have none." I am positive Paul is referring to times of persecution and Paul is trying to help the Christians survive.
 - i) Paul then goes on to say we should have a "light touch" on the world, as odds are, we will be on the run for a while.
 - ii) What is to be learned is that there may come a time in our future where we have to be on the run just for believing the Gospel message. At the least, we should occasionally pray for the Christians around the world who are in life and death struggles just for believing Jesus is God!

- d) At this point, I want to add, that Paul is spending a handful of verses teaching how to be single. Most Christian churches put on wonderful seminars on how to be married and how to have a successful marriage. This is all well and good and I support such concepts.
 - i) My point here is that the Christian church in general spends very little time and effort on the topic of how to be single.
 - ii) There is nothing wrong or anti-biblical about marriage and supporting marriage. At the same time, there are a lot of single Christians and Paul has spent the better part of this chapter teaching the benefits of being a single Christian.
 - iii) I am neither encouraging or discouraging marriage or being single here. My point is the Christian church collectively is often “embarrassed” to deal with the issue of being single and does not deal with it nearly as much as it deals with marriage!
 - iv) This leads to the next set of verses:
16. Verse 32: I would like you to be free from concern. An unmarried man is concerned about the Lord's affairs--how he can please the Lord.³³ But a married man is concerned about the affairs of this world--how he can please his wife--³⁴ and his interests are divided. An unmarried woman or virgin is concerned about the Lord's affairs: Her aim is to be devoted to the Lord in both body and spirit. But a married woman is concerned about the affairs of this world--how she can please her husband.³⁵ I am saying this for your own good, not to restrict you, but that you may live in a right way in undivided devotion to the Lord.
- a) Paul had a spiritual gift to remain single. Personally I don't have that gift, but there are many Christians who do. Neither being single or married is preferable to God. That is not the point. The point is those who are single have more time for God, as those who are married should spend some of their time caring for their spouse and children (if they have children). Further, Paul is saying one should not change their marital status based on Paul's little speech in this chapter.
 - b) Let's get back to discussing those who are single: If one is a single and a committed Christian, one should be focusing much of their time and efforts on pleasing God. Does that mean one should quit their job? No, unless it something immoral or a better opportunity presents itself. It means that if one is single, one can use their spare time in ways that make a difference for God's kingdom.
 - c) Too many single people think, “Well, let me get married first, or let me just find the right person, and then I'll devote more time to God.” I've discussed this point earlier. If one has the attitude of I'll wait until late to serve God, that “later” will always be later. There is always an excuse to not make a difference for God in one's life.
 - i) As a side note, from that last sentence to this sentence I had to take a 10 minute break, as my daughter had a bad dream and my wife asked me to lay with my daughter so my wife can get dressed. That's a simple example of how a married man has a split duty between one's time dedicated to God and giving one's time for one's family.
 - d) Getting back to the single people, I am convinced that if one starts dedicating time to doing projects for God, and one desires to be married, I have watched God bring together at the right times, people who should be together. My point here is that if one is single and one desires to be married, start spending some time doing projects for God, and “just watch” how God will bring the right people into one's lives!
 - i) My wife had a girlfriend who used to complain all the time she would never get married. That girlfriend had to let go of that desire. She actually made a commitment go do some missionary work and let go of her desire to be married. The funny thing is once she truly let it go, God brought a wonderful man into her life and now she is happily married. My point is to the single person who desires to be married. Sometimes one has to truly surrender that desire to God, and let God work on fulfilling that desire on His timing and not ours!

- e) The last sentence in this paragraph, Paul says, "I am not saying this to restrict you". Paul is not against people enjoying their life or not having fun. It's about putting one's life into perspective. God wants all of us to make a difference for Him, whether we are married or single. All of us can make some time for God if we are willing to organize our time. A single person can do "more" of this as there is no family commitment.
- i) I had a friend from graduate school that got into his early 40's and never got married. He spent his spare time traveling and doing "fun stuff". Then one day, a few years back, he was killed riding his bicycle as he was hit by a car. To my knowledge, he was not a religious man. He wasted his life doing "fun things". I am sorry about the tragedy that was his death. The really sorry thing is how he wasted his single-ness on himself instead of making a difference for God!
 - ii) Does this mean a single person can't enjoy traveling or a bike road? No, and that misses the point. The point is a single person has more time to dedicate for God to do things for God. That could be anything from a short term missionary trip to helping around one's local church to leading a bible study. What one does depends upon one's individual calling. The point is not to waste one's single time doing nothing but things just to please themselves.
 - iii) Believe it or not, all of this does tie to the text. Whether one is single or married, and a Christian, one has to remember that we belong to God: That includes our body, soul and spirit. If we belong to God, our job is to make a difference for God in how we live our lives.
- f) In the text, Paul says the married person is concerned with pleasing their spouse as well as pleasing God. Paul is not saying that as an insult. It is necessary that a married man or woman to dedicate time to their spouse as well as their children. The underlying point is the single person has more time to dedicate to God. It does not mean the married person is to ignore God, but the married person needs to understand their "split duties" in life of dedicating time for God as well as one's family.
- i) Personally, I call it the "triangle": As a married man, I have to give some time directly to God, some time directly to my wife and family and some time for work. It is not that each is mutually exclusive. I understand that God has called me to do all three and often they intermingle. Still, one has to constantly balance one's time with one's different commitments. The trick is not to let any one of those points dominate one's life to the point of ignoring the other.
 - a) In other words, if I'm spending too much time doing "things" for God to the point of ignoring my wife, that is a sin. If I'm spending so much time trying to please my wife that I'm ignoring work, that too is a problem. It is a constant "balance game" that is played out in life! Sometimes situations come where one has to focus more on one specific issue and that is understandable as well. God wants us to care about Him, but that also means we are to care about the things we are responsible for in life as well!
- g) Last thing: Verse 34 says, "An unmarried woman or virgin is concerned about the Lord's affairs: Her aim is to be devoted to the Lord in both body and spirit."
- i) This does not mean a married woman cannot be devoted to God. It just means a married person has "split duty" of carrying about one's spouse as well as God.
 - ii) The unmarried can be "fully" devoted to God in both body and spirit. Again, it doesn't necessary mean giving up school or one's day job, unless God is calling you into something different. It just means a single person can more dedicate one's time to God without having the dual responsibility of caring for a spouse!

17. Verse 36: If anyone thinks he is acting improperly toward the virgin he is engaged to, and if she is getting along in years and he feels he ought to marry, he should do as he wants. He is not sinning. They should get married.
 - a) Remember Paul is concerned about persecution in the church. I am convinced his main reason to discourage marriage at this point was a local issue concerning persecution.
 - b) At the same time Paul is saying that if a Christian wants to get married to another Christian, they should get married, and it is not sinful. If a couple wants to go through this life as a couple, and they both want to serve God, let them get married.
18. Verse 37: But the man who has settled the matter in his own mind, who is under no compulsion but has control over his own will, and who has made up his mind not to marry the virgin--this man also does the right thing. ³⁸ So then, he who marries the virgin does right, but he who does not marry her does even better.
 - a) Paul gives the "counter-point" in Verses 37 and 38. Paul is saying if a person has control over his sexual ability and has made up his mind not to marry someone, that is acceptable as well! Given the persecution that was about to happen, it was actually preferable.
 - b) Paul is not anti-marriage. Paul understood the future of the human race depended upon people getting married. Paul understood that passing on Christian values and teaching to the next generation depended upon there being good Christian homes.
 - c) Paul's point is he knew that persecution against Christians was about to happen, if it has not already started. He knew how tough it was going to be for Christians to physically stay alive in this world. Given that persecution, Paul is saying it is better in that situation to not get married. Still, if one decides to get married to another Christian, it is not a sin.
 - d) So how does this apply today? Should Christians get married? The general answer is yes. If one is living in an area or a time frame where Christians are being tortured and killed just for being a Christian, it may be wise to "think twice" about getting married, at least for the time being. If a couple decides they want to go through such persecution together, there is nothing anti-biblical about that idea. Paul is only warning that during such times, it is better to stay single as each person could then make a better run for it on their own!
19. Verse 39: 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, but he must belong to the Lord. ⁴⁰ In my judgment, she is happier if she stays as she is--and I think that I too have the Spirit of God.
 - a) As long as a married woman is alive, she is bound by her husband. She is under his domain, just as a married man must respect and honor the wife as if she was part of his own flesh. The point here is as long as a woman is married, she is required to focus part of her time on her husband. If she is single or divorced, she has more time for God.
 - b) Paul ends this section by saying the woman is happier if she stays as she is (reference to being single) due to the upcoming persecution.
20. Remember my theme for this lesson is to "bloom where you are planted and plant where you bloom". The point is if one is married, God expects you to honor that marriage and live a life for God in context of that marriage. God does not expect us to ignore our marriage for His sake.
 - a) If God calls us while we are single, we are to use that "singleness" for God. If we are single and we desire to get married, we give that desire to God and let Him bring the right person in our lives at the right time. It doesn't mean we lie in bed and wait for the right person to knock on the door. ☺ At the same time, single people are not to ignore God so they can go out and find the right person!
 - b) Paul wrote during a time of persecution. Paul expected the Christians to "bloom where they are planted" even during such times. It does mean they are to just stand there and be persecuted, but at the same time, one is not to deny their faith even when facing such persecution and torture!
 - c) To be married and to be single both have advantages and disadvantages. The point is to live for God in whatever situation we are called.

21. Let's pray: Father, Help us to live a life for you in whatever situation we are called. If we are single, help us to use that life for You. If we are married, help us to have a good balance between our time for You and our time for our spouses. In whatever case, help us to not ignore you and make a difference for You in our lives and to the lives of those around us. For we ask this in Jesus name, Amen.