

Marriage: Better, Stronger, Forever

1 Corinthians 7:1-16

God created marriage, and it is a wonderful gift. But your marriage will only become great and remain great if you invest in it. Paul commands husbands and wives to give themselves to one another by staying physically intimate and by staying committed.

Parents: Today's sermon like last week's will again deal with mature topics: sex in marriage and divorce. I won't be graphic, but I will be direct – particularly for the part about sex.

Turn to 1 Corinthians 7

Surveyed our staff this week. Asked them for commonly used phrases in our culture that we employ to excuse our behavior.

- YOLO – You only live once
- I just needed to get it out of my system
- Carpe Diem – the only Latin some people know
- Go with the flow. Don't make waves.
- When in Rome...
- What happens in Vegas...
- If you can't beat them, join them
- It's easier to ask forgiveness than to ask permission
- Who am I to judge? I don't need to form moral convictions
- Boys will be boys – excuse for failing to discipline/train a rowdy son
- To each his own
- It is what it is – I'm not responsible to try to change anything
- "I'm just being honest" – I just said something mean, but it's ok, because true

Corinthian slogans – intended to excuse some inappropriate behavior

- 6:12 – "All things are lawful for me" – do anything with my body
- 6:13 – "Food is for the stomach, and the stomach is for food, but God will do away with both"
- 8:1 – "We all have knowledge"
- 8:4 – "An idol in this world is nothing"
- 10:23 – "Everything is lawful"
- 7:1 – "It is good for a man not to touch a woman."
 - Element of truth, but misapplied; out of context
 - Used to condone improper behavior

We are morally responsible beings. No clever phrase can get us off the hook.

- Image of God – it is a gift, shared by no other creatures
 - Relationship, radiate His glory, rule on His behalf; RESPONSIBLE
 - Real moral choices with real consequences for which we are responsible
 - You are not an ant, or a mosquito, or a bird, or a trout
- Greater the gift, the greater the responsibility
- Marriage was the second gift God gave to mankind
 - First – relationship with God

- Second – lifelong companion

Biblical values, especially biblical marriage is being undermined in our society

- Best response? Christians, build great marriages.

If you are married, or if you hope to marry some day, devote yourself to building a great marriage. How can you make it better, stronger and last a lifetime? There are many ways to build your marriage, but in 1 Corinthians 7 Paul focuses on just two: 1) Get physical; 2) stay committed

1 Cor 7:1-5

READ 7:1.

- “Touch”/ “have” = sexual intercourse
- Where did this slogan come from? Don’t know.
- Asceticism (and immorality) was in vogue.
 - Some schools of Greek philosophy: abstinence facilitates enlightenment
 - Gnostic: spirit is good and body is bad
- Attempt to repudiate of immoral Corinthian culture
- Theological: Sexual relations with non-believing spouse defiles believer
- Element of truth
 - Outside of marriage, this is true. Inside marriage it is disastrous.
 - Physical relationship b/t husband and wife is important part of marriage

1. Stay physically intimate. *In marriage you are commanded to...*

- Enjoy your spouse
 - Proverbs 15:18-19; S of S 4:5-6; 1:6; 2:6
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 - Body designed for pleasure – sights, sounds, taste, touch, physical intimacy in marriage.
 - *Intended for Pleasure*. Most popular book on Christian marriage.
 - Physically impossible. Can’t see, hear, sex. See a doctor.
 - You can still touch. “The Human Touch,” Spencer Michael Free
 - Don’t want your spouse to touch you, or you don’t want to touch your spouse? Something is wrong; symptom
 - You never would have married if you had not anticipated enjoyment.
 - 7:5 – abstain for a time, not permanently
 - Why are we talking about this in church? I brought a friend
 - Our relationships with one another affect our relationship with God
 - When searching for best analogy for our relationship with Jesus, Paul chose marriage
 - Eph 5:25; 5:28-29
- Please your spouse – 7:3-5a
 - 6 – become a believer, belong to God
 - 7 – married, belong to your spouse
 - “you are my person”
 - Want to have a great physical relationship with spouse? Stop thinking only about yourself!
 - Not good? Probably taking and taking in other areas of marriage.
 - We live in a taking culture. Culture hates godly marriage.
 - 1 Cor 13
 - Phil 2
 - Practical: Talk about what each of you like and don’t like. Become students of one another
 - Invest in kids; discipline, training, sports, vacations

- Invest in professional development
 - Make time to be together physically
 - Students afraid of marriage. So many women in the world, and I pick one. My life has become narrower, smaller. I can't talk to these other women the same, enjoy their friendship the same, and I have lots of friends
 - You're standing on the wrong side of the door making that evaluation. When you walk through, an entirely new, larger world opens to you.
 - Paradox – die to self and find life
- Protect your spouse – 7:2
 - Good marriage protects us from temptation
 - Foolproof? No. But no sex in marriage is a recipe for disaster
 - Periodic abstinences trains self-sacrifice – 7:5

Ex – biblical values, especially biblical marriage is being undermined in our society

- Best response? Christians, build great marriages. Get physical; stay committed

2. Stay committed

- Married? Make promises? Vows? Last time reviewed? Immediately forgotten.
 - Bride and groom will say anything at that point
 - Marriage is a marathon. Ideally kick at the end. Not sprint to honeymoon
 - Permanence builds security
 - God's gift to us: I will never leave you nor forsake you
- To a Christian spouse (Christian married to Christian) – 7:10-11
 - Not dealing with all possible issues that arise in marriage.
 - General principle: marriage is for life
 - Jesus spoke directly to this: Matthew 19:4-6
 - Genesis. Marriage rooted in original creation. Not Jewish, Christian
 - “two become one flesh” = Creation of a new family
 - “man shall leave...and cleave” = “forsake” and “stick”
 - Old Testament culture man stayed and wife left
 - What is your highest priority? Your spouse, children, family over any other relationship
 - Unless a man hates father, mother...
 - Opposite: momma's boy
 - Opposite: daughter goes home to momma when it's hard
 - You are my highest priority, and I won't leave. This creates security
 - “both were naked and were not ashamed.” Why? Safe!
 - We can grow and change best when we are safe and secure
 - Song of Solomon 8:6-7 – love is as strong as death
- To a non-Christian spouse – 7:12-13
 - “Marriage to a non-Christian defiles me”
 - Marriage is rooted in creation. Marriage is ordained by God.
 - Even non-Christian marriage; even a Christian married to a non-Christian.
 - Advocating mixed marriage? No. But if you are already in it
 - 1 Cor 7:39
 - This may be how the unbeliever is saved – 7:16
 - Point: STAY. Why?
- Because marriage is God-ordained – 7:14
 - Think Old Testament – “clean” and “unclean”; in will of God or outside will of God
 - 1 Cor 6 – Christian sleeps with prostitute, she doesn't become “holy” because that relationship is outside the will of God.
 - Spouse is “sanctified/holy” = in the will of God

- Children are “unclean” or “holy” = not their morality but status
- Christians should never DIVORCE?
 - Refer past sermon on Matthew 19 on GBC website: “What God has joined together...”
 - Abandonment – 7:15
 - Adultery
 - Abuse. Sometimes hope can still be rekindled
- REMARRIAGE
 - If there are biblical grounds for divorce
- PERMANENCE
 - because marriage is a gift from God
 - because marriage displays God’s enduring love for us

Application

Unmarried

- This too can be a gift. Serve God with all your energy.
- Embrace the opportunities God has given you.

Divorced

- Learn contentment

Troubled marriage

- Battle. This is a gift from God to you.

Stagnant marriage

- Get seriously dissatisfied with mediocrity. Rekindle. Pursue
- Family Life

Good marriage

- Don’t get complacent