

Studies in 1 Corinthians

Lesson XXI: *Fulfilling our Calling*

TEXT: 1 COR. 7:20-40 (NLT)

20 Yes, each of you should remain as you were when God called you. **21** Are you a slave? Don't let that worry you—but if you get a chance to be free, take it. **22** And remember, if you were a slave when the Lord called you, you are now free in the Lord. And if you were free when the Lord called you, you are now a slave of Christ. **23** God paid a high price for you, so don't be enslaved by the world. ^[a] **24** Each of you, dear brothers and sisters, ^[b] should remain as you were when God first called you.

25 Now regarding your question about the young women who are not yet married. I do not have a command from the Lord for them. But the Lord in his mercy has given me wisdom that can be trusted, and I will share it with you. **26** Because of the present crisis, ^[c] I think it is best to remain as you are. **27** If you have a wife, do not seek to end the marriage. If you do not have a wife, do not seek to get married. **28** But if you do get married, it is not a sin. And if a young woman gets married, it is not a sin. However, those who get married at this time will have troubles, and I am trying to spare you those problems.

29 But let me say this, dear brothers and sisters: The time that remains is very short. So from now on, those with wives should not focus only on their marriage. **30** Those who weep or who rejoice or who buy things should not be absorbed by their weeping or their joy or their possessions. **31** Those who use the things of the world should not become attached to them. For this world as we know it will soon pass away.

32 I want you to be free from the concerns of this life. An unmarried man can spend his time doing the Lord's work and thinking how to please him. **33** But a married man has to think about his earthly responsibilities and how to please his wife. **34** His interests are divided. In the same way, a woman who is no longer married or has never been married can be devoted to the Lord and holy in body and in spirit. But a married woman has to think about her earthly responsibilities and how to please her husband. **35** I am saying this for your benefit, not to place restrictions on you. I want you to do whatever will help you serve the Lord best, with as few distractions as possible.

36 But if a man thinks that he's treating his fiancée improperly and will inevitably give in to his passion, let him marry her as he wishes. It is not a sin.

37 But if he has decided firmly not to marry and there is no urgency and he can control his passion, he does well not to marry. **38** So the person who marries his fiancée does well, and the person who doesn't marry does even better.

39 A wife is bound to her husband as long as he lives. If her husband dies, she is free to marry anyone she wishes, but only if he loves the Lord.^[d] **40** But in my opinion it would be better for her to stay single, and I think I am giving you counsel from God's Spirit when I say this.

Footnotes:

a. Greek *don't become slaves of people.*
c. or *the pressures of life.*

b. Greek *brothers*; also in 7:29.
d. Greek *but only in the Lord.*

Questions for Thought & Discussion

1. What groups of people does Paul address in this portion of chapter 7?
2. Why is verse 26 *key* to arriving at a proper understanding of the entire chapter? (cf. vv. 17-24)
3. Judging from vv 27-28, would you say that much of Paul's instruction falls in chapter 7 falls into the category of *wise counsel* or *non-optional command*? (see also vs. 40) Does God sometimes give us more than one right option in carrying out his will?
4. Is it acceptable for a widow/widower to remarry? (cf. vv 25-40; 8-9)
5. How can an unmarried Christian take full advantage of his or her singleness? (cf. vv 32-35)