

Exegetical Notes – 1 Corinthians 7:1-9

Prepared by Charles H. Jensen for Cornerstone Fellowship
101 Kyllies Road, Coatesville, PA 19320
610-384-1375
charleshjensen@aol.com

Introduction: There was correspondence between Paul and the Corinthian Church about which we have no record. Apparently, in a letter which we do not have, the Corinthians had written to Paul asking him to address certain concerns. In Chapter 7 of 1 Corinthians, Paul begins to answer the questions the Corinthian Elders had addressed to him as an Apostle. The first of these concerns marriage and celibacy.

1 Corinthians 7:1-9

Verses 1-2

Now for the matters you wrote about: “It is good for a man not to have sexual relations with a woman.”² But since sexual immorality is occurring, each man should have sexual relations with his own wife, and each woman with her own husband.

- Paul now begins to answer questions which had been addressed to him by the Corinthian Church.
- The first of these questions concerns the issues of celibacy and marriage. The Corinthians wanted to know if Christians should marry or remain celibate. This matter may have been raised because the early Christians expected the return of Christ to happen in a very short time (see John 21:20-23). If Jesus was coming so soon, should a Christian marry or not?
- The NIV translation introduces a problem when translating verse 1. The new NIV translates the verse as printed above. This translation allows the verse to refer to 1 Corinthians 6:9 where Paul condemns homosexuality as immoral and displeasing to God. It could be assumed that the Corinthians were saying that it is better for a man to have sex with another man than to have heterosexual relations. The old NIV translates the sentence, “It is better for a man not to marry.” It would then be an affirmation of celibacy. The Greek text literally says, “It is good for a man a woman not to touch.” The Greek texts deals with celibacy, saying that celibacy is best.

- The complication is sexual immorality. Sexual immorality is any sexual practice outside of marriage. The rule is that a man should only have sexual relations with his wife and a woman should only have sexual relations with her husband. There is to be NO sex outside of marriage.

Verses 3-5

³ The husband should fulfill his marital duty to his wife, and likewise the wife to her husband. ⁴ The wife does not have authority over her own body but yields it to her husband. In the same way, the husband does not have authority over his own body but yields it to his wife. ⁵ Do not deprive each other except perhaps 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.

- In a proper marriage, the husband is to please his wife and the wife is to please her husband. Abstinence from sexual relations within marriage is to be by mutual consent and temporary, and then as an act of fasting.
- Prolonged abstinence opens the door for temptation.

Verses 6-7

⁶ I say this as a concession, not as a command. ⁷ I wish that all of you were as I am. But each of you has your own gift from God; one has this gift, another has that.

- Paul was unmarried (see verse 8). He wishes that all Christians could remain unmarried as he is because this allows a person to devote themselves entirely to the Lord's concerns (see 1 Corinthians 7:32-35). However, he does not command people to remain unmarried because not everyone is able to remain sexually pure if they are unmarried.

Verses 8-9

⁸ Now to the unmarried and the widows I say: It is good for them to stay unmarried, as I do. ⁹ But if they cannot control themselves, they should marry, for it is better to marry than to burn with passion.

- The only options open to Christians are celibacy or marriage. There is no other acceptable sexual practice.
- The choice to marry or not is open to personal choice. Both celibacy and marriage are honorable.

- Paul believes that it is better for a Christian to remain celibate so that they can be fully devoted to the things of the Lord. However, sexual immorality is entirely unacceptable among Christians.

(These exegetical notes are the foundational study for the sermon based on 1 Corinthians 7:1-9. They have been prepared by the Reverend Doctor Charles H. Jensen. All rights are reserved by *Cornerstone Fellowship* & The Reverend Doctor Charles H. Jensen. They are used here by permission.)