

1 Corinthians Study 10

Read 1 Corinthians 7:17-40

KEY VERSE—

“But as God has distributed to each one, as the Lord has called each one, so let him walk. And so I ordain in all the churches.” (7:17)

SUMMARY—

Paul deals with many marital issues in this chapter in response to questions the Corinthians had addressed to him (7:1,25). Among these are celibates and married people in general. More specifically he also addresses two married Christians (7:10), two separated Christians (7:11), Christians married to unbelievers (7:12-14), Christians separated from unbelievers (7:15-24), virgin girls (7:25-35), parents of virgin girls (7:36-38), and widows (7:39-40). We also come across a somewhat different aspect of inspiration—divinely approved advice that is given by the apostle which we will need to try to respect and understand (7:25-26,40).

QUESTIONS—

- 1) Some people accuse Christians of breaking up families because of the choices they make in commitment to Christ. Is that what Paul teaches them to do (7:17)?

- 2) What two things does Paul use to illustrate the Christian’s responsibility to remain with his unsaved partner (7:12-13,17-24)? Why was there no need for him to change those relationships? In contrast, what kind of relationships did he need to break off (cf. 5:9-11; 6:9-11,18)?

- 3) Is he saying that the “calling in which he was called” is the situation that they found themselves in, or that they must remain faithful to the Lord’s calling no matter what the situation was (7:17-24; cf. 1:2,9,24,26; 7:15; Ephesians 4:1)?

4) Do any of those things mentioned (7:15-22) prevent us from living as a Christian? Can our external circumstances ever have the power to dictate our service to God? Do we sometimes give them that power?

5) Regardless of our station in life, what two principles should determine how we live (7:19,22)? What is true about these physical relationships in light of the greater spiritual relationship (7:18-24)?

6) Paul points out that even the bondage of slavery could not infringe on their service to God (7:21-22). Does that have any bearing on the phrase “not under bondage” in 7:15, and help explain whether he is saying there that the marriage bond is totally dissolved, or that such a marital situation cannot impede their service to God?

7) In regard to their questions about virgins, what teaching of Jesus’ ministry could he share with them (7:25; cf. 7:10)? What personal revelation could he share with them (cf. 7:12)? What could he share with them then (7:25,40)? What should we and the Corinthians make of this advice?

8) Are Paul’s instructions in 7:25-40, divine decree or spiritual judgment? What do we know about the value of spiritual judgment (cf. 2:15-16; 6:2-5)?

9) Should we recognize a difference between divine dictates and good advice? Does even good advice carry the authority of God’s word? Can you think of any modern examples?

10) Was Paul's advice good advice? How do we know (cf. 7:25,40)? Are we free to choose to heed his advice or reject it? Even though we pay a price for not heeding his advice, does that make us guilty of sin (7:28,36)?

11) What circumstances needed to be considered in answering their questions about the unmarried (7:26)?

12) Why was it good for them not to marry (7:26-35)? Was it a sin to marry in spite of Paul's instructions (7:36-38)?

13) What is Paul saying in regard to the things which they have treasured and considered important (7:29-31)? Was the present order or the future order more important? Which one was permanent?

14) If Paul had bound his convictions and spiritual advice on the Corinthians, how could that have actually been unprofitable for these brethren (7:35; cf. 1 Timothy 4:1-3)?

15) Who are the people identified in 7:36-38? Father and daughter? Fiancee and his espoused? Is there any way that all three could actually be under consideration?

16) In this passage, is Paul discussing things which are either good or bad, or things which are either good or better? In a nutshell, what is Paul's advice to them in view of this "present distress"?

17) What is God's law on marriage (7:39a)? What is Paul's advice to widows (7:39b-40)?

18) Does the phrase "only in the Lord" mean "as the Lord approves or allows" (cf. 11:11; Ephesians 6:1)? Or does it mean that she can only marry another Christian? Is this Paul's divinely sanctioned advice or a moral requirement given by the Lord?

19) Why would Paul give such instruction to a widow?