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Concerning Marriage
7: 1-40

As we study this chapter, it is important to keep in mind that **Paul** is replying to a series of definite questions. **He** is not spelling out a complete "theology of marriage" in one chapter. It is necessary to consider as well what the rest of the Bible has to say about this important subject. **Paul**, under the inspiration of **the Ruach Ha'Kodesh**, had to answer questions that **Yeshua** never discussed; but when a question arose that **the Lord** had dealt with, **Paul** referred to **His** words **(Matthew 5:31-32, 19:1-12; Mark 10:1-12; Luke 16:18)**.[175]



The church in **Corinth** had unmarried couples living together. It also had those who had multiple marriages and divorces. Not only that, but some believers had gotten the idea that being single and celibate was more spiritual than being married, and they rejected marriage entirely. Perhaps some were teaching that sex was "unspiritual" and should be forsaken altogether. The situation was difficult and perplexing even for mature believers. However, for the baby believers, it was especially confusing. The great question was, "What do we do now that we are believers but not married? Get married? Have one move out? Should we become, or remain, single? What should one do if married to an unbeliever? Get a divorce? Or stay married? The chaos of marital possibilities posed many questions.[176]

In evaluating **Paul's** teaching here, one must keep in mind the circumstances in which **he** wrote, especially these three points. First, **the Corinthian** church had emerged from a wildly pagan background and even at the time of this letter was not fully able to control its impulses toward sexual license. Second, **Paul** tailored **his**

remarks to **his** audience, who were still **spiritual babies (3:1)**. That meant that **he** had to provide clear-cut guidelines since **he** could not count on their spiritual discernment to know what to do in each individual case. It's risky to entrust **babies** with decisions beyond **their** capacity. Third, and most importantly, the whole tone of the letter has an underlying sense of urgency: **What I am saying, brothers, is that there is not much time left (7:29a).** The situation in **Corinth** was deteriorating rapidly as a result of the teaching of **the false apostles** (see the commentary on **Second Corinthians Af – The Problem of the False Teachers**).[177]

Something had to be done . . . and quickly.

So, it is important to understand that **Paul** was writing a letter, not a handbook on how to have a happy marriage. As a result, **his** letter sounds much more conversational in tone than a tightly outlined book manuscript. In some places **Paul** seems to go off on tangents. In others, **he** begins a topic, sets it aside while addressing another, and then returns to the earlier one. In other words, **he** wrote it as **he** might speak if we were meeting **him** for coffee at Starbucks. We'll discuss each section of this chapter in chronological order, keeping in mind that we might find ourselves dancing to the drumbeat to which **Paul** wrote.[178]