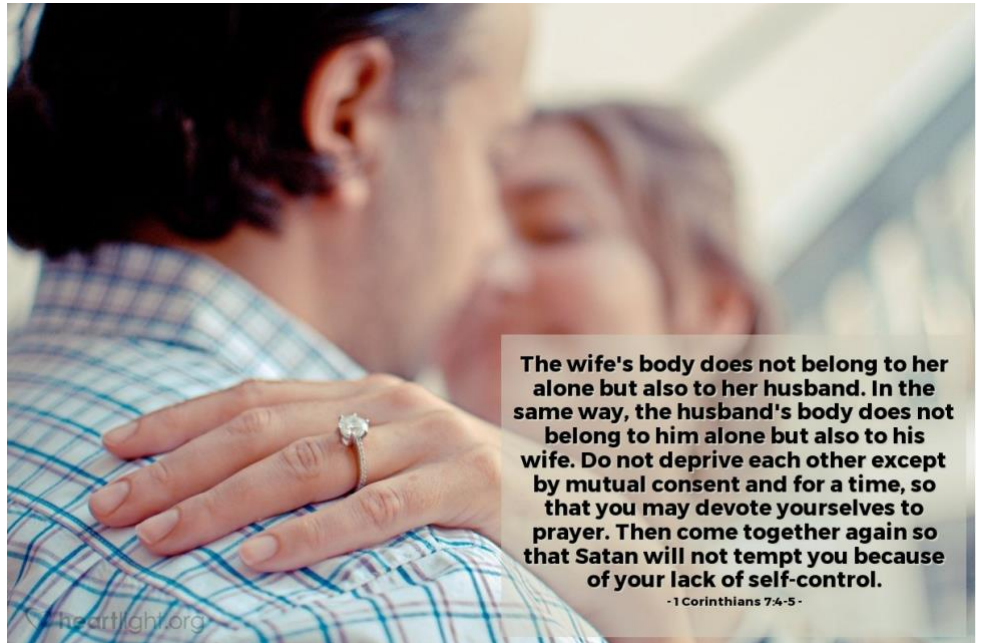


# 1 Corinthians, Chapter 7 (Part 1)

**Luther's Marriage Prayer:** *O Lord God, who has created man and woman and has ordained them for the marriage bond, making them fruitful by Your blessing, and has typified therein the sacramental union of Your dear Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, and the church, His bride, we beg Your infinite goodness and mercy that You will not permit this Your creation, ordinance, and blessing to be disturbed or destroyed but will graciously preserve the same, through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.*



After St. Paul's plea for unity (chapters 1-4) and his discussion of moral problems (chapters 5-6), he proceeds to answer questions submitted to him by the Corinthians. The questions dealt with the application of Christian freedom. In 1 Cor. 7, St. Paul dwells on matters pertaining to the question whether or not to marry. His advice represents indirect counseling, since he leaves it to the individual to decide the question on the basis of the Word of God, his or her own ability or inability to cope with sexual desires, and the unsettled conditions prevailing in the Roman Empire. **Read: 1 Corinthians 7:1-16.**

Keep in mind that what we read in 1 Corinthians 7 must be read in light of the chaotic conditions, social customs, and pagan background of the early Christian era. St. Paul distinguishes between the Word of God, which is permanent, and his counsel, which is contingent on circumstances. Note also that this chapter does not contain all of St. Paul's teaching on marriage.

1. St. Paul advises the Corinthian Christians (because of their environment) to remain single. The original Greek says that it is not sensible to marry. St. Paul cites reasons for his counsel.
  - a. Consider the advice St. Paul gives to younger widows in 1 Timothy 5:14. How does this verse help us to understand Paul's attitude toward marriage?
  - b. From 1 Timothy 3:2 and 12, St. Paul expected that overseers (bishops) and deacons (a congregation's spiritual leaders) would be married, however this was not a requirement. What advantages might marriage offer to pastors?
2. Even though St. Paul says it would be sensible for the Corinthians to remain unmarried for the time, he recommends marriage in 1 Cor. 7:2. What awareness of fallen human nature is St. Paul revealing in 1 Cor. 7:2 and 1 Cor. 7:5?
3. What understanding about the nature of the marriage relationship is stated in 1 Cor. 7:3-6?

4. The “concession” Paul speaks about in 1 Cor. 7:6 refers to the freedom to choose to marry or not to marry. Although marriage is God’s design as part of His creation, it is not commanded that anyone marry. To most, God gives the gift of marriage; to few He gives the gift of living a single life.
  - a. What reasons might someone have for choosing to remain unmarried (non-cohabitating)?
  - b. St. Paul remained unmarried by choice. What does 2 Cor. 11:23-29 indicate about why he might have deliberately remained unmarried?
  - c. In what ways might a congregation meet the particular needs of unmarried adults?
  
5. St. Paul speaks to those who are married, giving what he knows is a command from the Lord (Matthew 19:5-6), not merely his own counsel. That command is that people are to marry for life (1 Cor. 7:10-11). He allows, however, for the possibility that a Christian might separate from her or his spouse. If a Christian does separate or divorce, he calls for her or him to remain single or, if possible, to be reconciled to the separated spouse (1 Cor. 7:11a). What reasoning is behind this direction?
  
6. The Triune God meant for marriage to fulfill several purposes. What do these following passages say about the purposes of marriage?
  - a. 1 Corinthians 7:3-4
  - b. Genesis 1:28
  - c. Genesis 2:18
  
7. St. Paul urges Christians who are married to unbelievers to make the marriage work if at all possible (1 Cor. 7:12-14). Consider what he says in 1 Cor. 7:14 about the unbelieving spouse being “made holy” and the children being “holy.” [This does not mean that other members in a believer’s family will automatically be saved, since each person is saved through his or her own faith, not the faith of another (Mark 16:16)]. How might the presence of a Christian in a family bring holiness into that family?
  
8. What advice does St. Paul give concerning a Christian’s choice of a marriage partner? (see: 1 Cor. 7:39 and 2 Cor. 6:14-16)



### **Matrimony Address from the LSB Rite of Holy Matrimony**

*The union of husband and wife in heart, body, and mind is intended by God for the mutual companionship, help, and support that each person ought to receive from the other, both in prosperity and adversity. Marriage was also ordained so that man and woman may find delight in one another. Therefore, all persons who marry shall take a spouse in holiness and honor, not in the passion of lust, for God has not called us to impurity but in holiness. God also established marriage for the procreation of children who are to be brought up in the fear and instruction of the Lord so that they may offer Him their praise.*

### **Closing Prayer: (from LSB 649 – Blest Be the Tie That Binds)**

Blest be the tie that binds Our hearts in Christian love; The fellowship of kindred minds Is like to that  
above. Amen.

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**Sources:** God's Word for Today: 1 Corinthians (CPH: 1997), LifeLight: 1 Corinthians (CPH: 2007), Luther's Works (CPH, Fortress), Concordia Commentary: 1 Corinthians (CPH: 2000)