

Premarital Instruction Courses

1. **Overview of Marriage** (Course 1)
 - a. Good/Creatational – God Intended
 - i. 1 Man and 1 Woman = 1 Flesh
 - ii. Image and Likeness of God = Man and Woman Together are Divine Imagers for the Creator over His Creation
 - iii. ***Genesis 1:26-31; 2:7-9, 15-24***
 - b. Fall/Rebellion – Ignorance and Idolatry
 - i. Confusion and Deception about 1 Man and 1 Woman relationships in the form of divorce, sex outside of marriage, absence of self-denying sacrificial love toward spouses in marriage, same sex unions, polygamy (While described in the Bible, it is NOT prescribed to be practiced.), hurt, and abuse.
 - ii. ***Genesis 3***
2. **What Makes a Marriage Christian?** (Course 2)
 - a. Having Jesus the Lord at the Center of Your Marriage
 - i. Jesus came into the world to undo the effects of the Fall and to restore the image and likeness of God in us by His Spirit through His death on the Cross for our sinful ignorance and idolatry.
 - ii. Jesus' resurrection grants eternal spiritual life that begins now by serving Him as Lord and King.
 - b. LOVE and SEX when Jesus is at the Center of Your Marriage
 - i. LOVE – Christians live according to the New Commandment Jesus gives in ***John 13:34-35***.
 1. This Christ-like love is self-denying and sacrificial; putting the best interests of others (especially our spouse's) before our own self-interests. This is a serving love enabled by the power of the Holy Spirit in the life of Believers.
 - a. ***Philippians 2:1-11 & Galatians 5:22-24***
 - ii. SEX – Christians express and enjoy their most intimate love within marriage through regular intercourse with one another. God is no kill-joy. He created us as sexual beings, and He wants us to fully enjoy it *within its proper biblical context between 1 Man and 1 Woman who have publically pledged their commitment in love to one another.*

1. ***Proverbs 5:15-20***
2. Nevertheless, some are called to a single and celibate life by desire or circumstance, and such is to be used as a gracious opportunity to freely serve and honor the Lord Jesus as did the Apostle Paul (***1 Corinthians 7:6-9***).
3. What if only one of us is a baptized Christian? (Supplemental Course)
 - a. The Christian's responsibilities, and the unbelieving spouse's public agreement to: 1) allowing the Lordship of Jesus within the home, and 2) a public Christian Order of Service to Holy Matrimony.
 - i. Addressed pastorally with couples on a case-by-case basis and in consultation with other pastoral elders/overseers as needed.
 - ii. ***1 Corinthians 7***
 1. Implications, Applications & Insights
 - a. *Ref. Ciampa & Rosner accompanying outline especially in relation to ***verses 39-40*** regarding "Paul's Counsel for Widows" and potential implications especially in light of the good creational aspect of marriage between 1 Man and 1 Woman.
4. What are the Purposeful Blessings of Christian Marriage? (Course 3)
 - a. To Witness to the True Hope of Deliverance from our Ignorance and Idolatry.
 - i. The Fall has marred the image and likeness of God in both Men and Women, and this, in turn, diminishes and distorts the world's views of SEX and LOVE.
 - ii. Christian Marriage points to *Union with Jesus by which Christians are Redeemed to be His Beautiful Bride.*
 1. By the Blood of Jesus, Christians are cleansed of our corruption and redeemed from our rebellion, so we may enjoy Jesus as our Faithful Friend and Honorable Husband who loved us and gave Himself fully for us.
 2. By Jesus' love, we may now freely love our Father in Heaven and one another; especially as Husband and Wife for our joy and satisfaction in the New Restored Creation that is the Kingdom of God. This is a marvelous mystery.
 - a. ***Ephesians 5:22-33***
 - b. To Grow the Family of God
 - i. ***Ruth 4***

*1 Corinthians 7:39-40 “Paul’s Counsel for Widows”

via Ciampa & Rosner for

Implications, Applications and Insights for
a Christian Seeking Marriage to a Non-Christian

1. 7:1-16 – MARITAL STATUS

- a. *Verse 1* – literally not ‘to touch’ as a derogatory euphemism toward a woman who is being used as a mere object to fulfill one’s sexual appetite; “a unilateral act on the part of the man” (Ciampa & Rosner).
- b. *Verses 2-5* – “Paul’s own thinking about sex and marriage is consistently expressed in terms of mutual and symmetrical rights and responsibilities. [Paul speaks of] an obligation to give love, not a right to demand love” (Ciampa & Rosner).
 - i. “Paul either envisages physical [sexual] union within marriage or celibacy.
 1. “Paul never refers to procreation, even when discussing Christian heterosexual couple’s relationships. ...for Paul, marriage is grounded in the goodness of creation [cf. *Genesis 2:24; Song of Solomon 2:16a; 6:3a; 7:10a*].
 - a. “Paul clearly does not share the late Stoic view, accepted by the church fathers who attributed it to him, that sex was to be engaged in only for the purpose of procreation [e.g. Augustine, Clement of Alexandria]” (Ciampa & Rosner).
 - ii. *Verse 4* – “...a pointed reminder to husbands who thought they were free to continue sexual relationships with household slaves, prostitutes, or consorts that they were not in fact free to do” (Ciampa & Rosner).
 - iii. *Verse 7* – “...Paul does not think the couples he is addressing are prepared permanently to abstain from sex, but would be in danger of being tempted by Satan because of their ‘lack of self-control’ if they were to abstain for any but the shortest of periods” (Ciampa & Rosner).
 1. In v. 7 the *gift from God* is not celibacy itself, especially conceived as a perpetual state. ...a gift is freely and graciously bestowed by God; and gifts are given for the building up of the body of Christ. ...the states of celibacy/singleness and marriage are common gifts of providence to all creation. When Paul talks of ‘gifts’ in his letters, he means those having reference not to creation but to the new creation of the kingdom and the gospel, gifts that carry responsibilities specifically to God and God’s people. The gifts that Paul has in mind in v. 7 refer to the contentedness contributing to a life of service rather than a lifelong calling to ‘eunuch-hood’ (cf. *Matt. 19:12*). That Paul’s ‘gift’ concerns the capacity to concentrate on the work of the gospel without being distracted by sexual desires, whether unexpressed, as in the case of the celibate, or expressed, as for those married, is suggested by what follows in v. 9” (Ciampa & Rosner).
 - iv. *Verses 8-9* – “Paul expresses his own preference that widows and other single people remain unmarried and his concern that they may not be able to ‘control themselves’ and may ‘burn with passion’” (Ciampa & Rosner).
 - v. *Verses 10-11* – “Paul’s counsel seems more directly aimed at dissuading a woman who was thinking of leaving her husband in order to marry someone else (rather than out of a preference for celibacy).
 1. “...most people divorced their spouses in order in order to marry someone else, and there is no reason to think the Corinthians were acting any differently. In fact, Paul’s directive in v. 11 would have little or no dissuasive power if the woman’s intention was in fact to remain celibate and unmarried. It could very well dissuade someone from divorcing their husband, however, if that divorce was being sought in order to marry someone else.
 - a. “The incestuous marriage between Herod Antipas and Herodias that was so severely criticized by John the Baptist (*Mark 6:17-18; Matt. 14:3-4; Luke 3:19*) and subsequently cost him his life was one that was entered into only

after they had each divorced their prior spouses in order to marry each other. That Jesus describes divorce and remarriage as adultery (*Mark 10:11-12; Matt. 5:32; 19:9; Luke 16:18*) and that in the Sermon on the Mount he discusses this issue immediately after warning that ‘anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart’ (*Matt 5:28*) may reflect this background in which divorce and remarriage frequently served as a way of committing legalized adultery.

2. “In 6:11 Paul admitted that some of them used to be guilty of sexual immorality including specific behaviors as adulterers..., but God had washed and sanctified them, so that they were no longer to be thought of (or acting) in those ways.
 3. “Paul’s prohibitions of divorce for Christian married couples is based on the teaching of Jesus, which was later preserved in *Mark 10:2-12/Luke 16:18*. ...while *Deuteronomy 24:1-4* presupposes the legitimacy of divorce, other texts disallow it under certain circumstances (*Deut. 22:19, 28-29; Mal. 2:15-16*). Jesus’ teaching on divorce is presented as the authoritative interpretation *Deuteronomy 24:1-4*, and Paul’s appeal to the teaching of Jesus shows that the Old Testament and the Lord’s teaching (which frequently consists of such scriptural interpretations) are both norms for Christian ethics. Paul stands with Jesus in holding that divorce may be justified only where one partner clearly manifests a radical refusal to respect one’s marital commitments and maintain the fundamental integrity of the marriage.
 - a. “Wives and husbands are not well served by either overly lax or overly restrictive interpretations of biblical teachings on divorce and remarriage, and it is incumbent upon Christian leaders to provide counsel that takes seriously both God’s commitment to the preservation of marriage wherever possible and his commitment to the protection of the vulnerable (those who continue to suffer due to the hardness of human hearts)” (Ciampa & Rosner).
- vi. *Verses 12-13* – “...religious differences are no reason to end the marriage. Paul, as his knowledge of Genesis 2:24 (see 1 Cor. 6:16) shows, knew that marriage was a creation ordinance and was not to be willingly dissolved except under extreme circumstances...(cf. *1 Pet. 3:7*).
- vii. *Verse 14* – “The notion that holiness rather than uncleanness is contagious has only marginal biblical support (cf. Exod. 29:37; 30:29; Lev. 6:18) prior to the ministry of Jesus. When Jesus touched unclean people, however, rather than becoming unclean himself his own holiness proved contagious, making the unclean clean (e.g., Mark 1:40-44//Matt. 8:2-3//Luke 5:12-14; Mark 5:25-34, 39-42). So also in Paul’s view, perhaps due to the example of Jesus, holiness is more powerful than impurity, at least the holiness that comes through Christ’s sanctifying work. ...Christians live in a new and potent field of God’s holiness that works irrespective of gender. ...Paul differs from rabbinic teaching since, unlike them, ‘he does not rule that offspring born within an exogamous marriage take on the status of the inferior spouse; instead he affirms that the children are ‘holy,’ that is, have full access to the temple constituted by the sanctified community.’ It is the Lord’s sanctioning of their parents’ marriage which accomplishes that and allows them to experience the blessing of living within a community inhabited by the Spirit of God. Both parts of v. 14 serve to support Paul’s injunction to believers in mixed marriages not to divorce their partners (vv. 12b and 13b)” (Ciampa & Rosner).
- viii. *Verse 15* – “The unbelieving spouse of a Christian ought to find in them a model of self-sacrificing love that is even more committed to the health of the marriage and to blessing their spouse than ever before, such that only a radical prejudice could explain their unwillingness to continue in the marriage. ...since believers are called to peace, it would be inappropriate for them to be so un-peace-loving as to divorce a spouse who is part of the sanctified family unit and is willing to live with them (vv. 12-13). Rather than being

antagonistic, they should take a peace-loving approach. **Romans 12:18** makes the point of v. 15 more generally” (Ciampa & Rosner).

- ix. **Verse 16** – “The context favors an optimistic thrust, since Paul’s main stress is on reasons why such marriages should be preserved rather than abandoned. Verse 16 provides both Christian husbands and wives one more reason for staying in their mixed marriages. Peter certainly gives women hope that wise Christian living might lead to the conversion of their unbelieving spouse (**1 Pet. 3:1-4**). Paul’s point that the unbelieving spouse has been sanctified by their marriage to a believer (v. 14) with the result that they have been brought into an unusually powerful position from which to receive Christian influence and witness in the midst of God’s temple, the ‘sphere in which God’s holiness and transforming power operate,’ would certainly raise one’s hopes for the potential conversion of the unbelieving spouse” (Ciampa & Rosner).

2. 7:17-20 – ETHNIC STATUS

3. 7:21-23 – SOCIAL STATUS

4. 7:24 – KEY ENUNCIATION OF PAUL’S EXHORTATIONS – *do NOT seek to change your marital, ethnic or social status*

5. 7:25-38 “Paul’s Counsel for Single Adults” – “In vv. 25-38 Paul addresses the question of ‘virgins,’ mainly from the point of view of their potential suitors and actual fiancés, and he advises them to stay unmarried for three reasons: (1) because of the ‘present crisis’ (7:25-28); (2) because of the end of the world (7:29-31); and (3) because of the distractions of married life (7:32-35). However, this advice is tempered with the proviso of freedom to choose whether or not to marry (7:36-38). Verse 38 sums up Paul’s stance: ‘he who marries the virgin does right, but he who does not marry her does better.’

- a. **Verses 25-35** – “Paul is responding to people whose preference would be to marry and who need reassurance from him that he is not adamantly opposed to the idea. He is the one who thinks it would be best for virgins to remain single, but they are free to marry and need to know that if they do they will not be sinning (vv. 25-28). He wants to spare them the troubles they will experience in life if they get married (v. 28). He wants them to be free from the concerns they will experience if they go ahead and marry (v. 32). He is concerned that his words might be interpreted as an attempt ‘to restrict’ them (v. 35)” (Ciampa & Rosner).

- i. Verses 26 – THE ‘PRESENT CRISIS’ – “In any case, in v. 26 Paul is saying that the unusually difficult circumstances in Corinth [perhaps famine] mean that staying single is advisable, at least for the time being. Paul’s advice regarding marriage in this passage may be due as much to the extenuating circumstances in the church as to abstract theological convictions. The wisdom (or not) of marrying or making other critical life decisions that will effect the lives of others may depend on the presence or absence of a more-or-less stable social environment. Important decisions in life (as well as mundane ones), if made wisely, will take into consideration the social context. Times of great social and economic upheaval and instability that reflect the extreme frailty and passing nature of this world (of which our eschatology reminds us) in tangible and threatening ways call for great caution and reflection upon our ultimate goals and mission in life and how such decisions cohere with them. We need wisdom to discern the times and understand our circumstances so as to know the best way to glorify God and avoid putting ourselves or others under unnecessary duress. Paul’s teaching about marriage in 1 Corinthians 7 is a ‘practical reflection on concrete circumstances.’”

- ii. Verse 27 – “The fact that Paul does not recommend a dissolution of the betrothal commitment suggests that at some point in the future (when *the present crises* is over) the couple might, or perhaps should, go ahead with the marriage. The men Paul has in mind in this verse would have been either betrothed to one of the ‘virgins’ mentioned in v. 25, or thinking about finding a virgin to marry. Paul is saying, ‘if you are betrothed to “a virgin” (or married), stay as you are (the Lord’s command applies here); if you are single, do not seek betrothal and marriage.’ The second part of the verse is clearly not addressed to engaged

men, but to single men who are not engaged. This supports the view that the passage as a whole is (mainly) addressing single men who may (vv. 27a, 36-38) or may not (vv. 27b-28, 32-35) be engaged already.

- iii. Verse 28 – “Paul is explicitly talking about troubles or afflictions suffered especially by *those who marry*, troubles and afflictions that will not be experienced as fully by single people. In times of ‘crisis’ the blessing of a spouse and children can become a grievous burden. Paul ends the paragraph where he started, judging that for practical reasons (perhaps the impact of famine in Corinth, or some other crisis) it would be better not to marry.
- iv. Verse 29 – “Paul’s point is that ‘the present crisis’ (the famine) is *like* that of the End, which is approaching; in other words, the present woes of vv. 25-28 are in some sense typical of the parousia woes alluded to in vv. 29-31. The primary purpose of vv. 29-31 is to set the question of whether to marry or not in proper proportion and perspective. According to Paul, being married or not is not central to the Corinthians’ (or our) identity, but rather being ‘in Christ Jesus’ (1 Cor. 1:30). Paul counsels a clear-sighted measure of detachment based on the conviction that the cross has judged the present age and the goal of history looms; such eschatological realities change forever the value to be put on current circumstances and happiness.
- v. Verses 30-32 – “Heavenly-mindedness does not mean that the Corinthians will no longer need to ‘do business.’ But such activities are not to divert a believer in Christ from the real business of life. Two of the parables of Jesus are especially pertinent here [The Parable of the Great Banquet (*Luke 14:15-24*) and The Parable of the Coming of the Son of Man (*Luke 17:26-37*)]. Material things can cost spiritually. Paul’s advice is not ‘to hold firmly’ to them, to possess them but not to let them possess you. [Instead] live lives of undistracted devotion to the Lord. [Set proper priorities (*cf. Luke 10:40-41* regarding Martha and Mary)].

b. Verses 36-38 – “the Corinthian man Paul has in mind clearly ‘feels he ought to marry’; that is what ‘he wants.’ Paul is thinking of a man struggling with ‘control over his own will.’ He feels that those who are not compelled to marry do best not to do so (at least in the context of the temporary crisis in Corinth; see on v. 26), but he wants them to know that he will not blame them if they do” (Ciampa & Rosner).

6. 7: 39-40 “*Paul’s Counsel for Widows*” - “Paul indicates that a widow ‘is free to marry anyone she wishes,’ but it is his view that she would be happier if she stay single” (Ciampa & Rosner).

a. “*...but he must belong to the Lord.*” – “However, it would be wrong to take Paul’s words as a universal command. For a Christian to marry someone else in Christ is rather, as Fee puts it, ‘good sense.’ One thing that 1 Corinthians 7 definitely shows is that in many areas of sexual ethics Paul’s teaching cannot be reduced to ‘following orders.’ Elliptical expressions like ‘only in the Lord’ need something to be supplied to be accurately understood; in this case, ‘my advice would be...’ fits the tenor of Paul’s instructions. We do not actually know whether or not the betrothed virgins discussed in vv. 36-38 were believers. It may well have been a complicating factor if men were betrothed to virgins and then converted to Christ before the betrothal was transformed into marriage. The question about virgins may also have arisen in part due to the challenges of finding a spouse from within the Christian community when it was undoubtedly a rather small group. What was a man to do if he did not feel that he could live the life of a celibate single man but there were no good options within the church? The question is not one of sin and not sin, but one of good and better” (Ciampa & Rosner).