

Spiritual Sex

1 Corinthians 7

The Corinthian Question

Believe it or not, the crazy-mixed-up Corinthians seemed to be polarised between those who think Christians can do what they like with their bodies, and those who go to the other extreme and say Christians should have no fun at all!

How would you summarise the world sees the “Christian” attitude to sex these days?

Do you think there's any justification for the view that Christianity is “anti sex”?

No sex please, we're Christians...

After his strong words on sexual immorality in chapter 6, Paul turns his attention to some issues the Corinthians have asked his advice on. There's a pattern in the way Paul deals with their questions. First he states their position, then he partly affirms it, then he balances it.

Read 1 Corinthians 7:1-7

2. What is the key statement Paul is responding to?

Note: The NIV Translation “*It is good for a man not to marry*” is more literally “*It is good for a man not to touch a woman*” By this the Corinthians actually meant: “*It's good for a man not to have sexual relations with a woman.*” So, is it? Is there actually something unspiritual about sexuality? As you read the chapter you'll notice some unbalanced implications of this idea. The “ascetics” at Corinth were promoting ideas like marriage without sex, leaving your partner for God- especially unbelieving partners - and keeping your fiance waiting forever without getting married!

Read through Paul's response to these issues in the rest of chapter 7...

3. How does Paul describe our human natures when it comes to sex?

What verses say this?

What solution does Paul offer?

What will the truly “spiritual” Christian do?

4. Can you think of any other ways in which “Christianity” has promoted the idea that harsh treatment of the body is somehow “spiritual”? (Colossians 2:20-23 has something to say about this)

Better than sex?!

To Paul, whether you marry or not isn't a measure of your spirituality. There's nothing “more spiritual” about abstaining from sex and marriage. But there's *one reason* why you might stay single!

5. What is it that Paul sees as more important than sex and marriage?
6. Is this your perspective? Why or why not?
7. In what ways should this perspective on priorities guide your marriage decisions?
8. Does v 14 justify a Christian marrying a non-Christian? (What does the verse mean?)
9. Verses 8,11,20,24,40 have something in common. What is it? What's the overall message of this chapter?

Paul simply wants the Corinthians to be content the way they are! If you're married, stay that way. If you're not, don't be anxious about it! There are more important things in life! So in summary...

a) According to this chapter, how can married people:

- show contentment in their circumstances?
- honour the Lord?

b) According to this chapter, how can single people:

- show contentment in their circumstances?
- honour the Lord?

c) What are the principles that everyone should apply to their circumstances?

You and Me...

What will it mean for you to be content in your circumstances?

What will it mean for you to honour God in your circumstances?

What will it mean for you to regard God's opinion of your life as the only one of real value?

Many marriages are placed under tension by partners who use sexuality as a “bargaining chip.” How will this chapter help Christians avoid this trap?