

## 14. Learning to Build a Godly Marriage

In our last topic, we saw that we are to help our children understand that their body is the temple of God so that they will use both their body and their spirit to glorify God. We were given a special warning about the fact that any sexual sin is a sin against the temple where the Holy Spirit dwells. As a result, we are to conduct our life in such a way that we glorify God. Marriage was the first institution that God established when He brought Eve to Adam in Genesis 2. In order to help our children learn to glorify God in their body, we want to help them learn how to build a godly marriage so that they are able to glorify God both with their body and with their human spirit.

The Corinthian Christians had questions arise and so had written to Paul to ask him for instructions. The answers that Paul gave to these questions help us to know how to answer our physical and spiritual children when they ask similar questions. One of the areas where the Corinthians had questions was whether singleness was superior to marriage since Paul was single. 1 Corinthians 7:1-2 says, “Now concerning the things of which you wrote to me: *It is* good for a man not to touch a woman. Nevertheless, because of sexual immorality, let each man have his own wife, and let each woman have her own husband.” Paul says that it is good for a man to be single and not have sexual relationships. However, he also says that it is also good for a man to have a wife or for a woman to have a husband in order to avoid sexual immorality by having sexual relationships with the husband or wife that the Lord has given the person.

Paul is going to give instructions to those who do not have strong sexual desires and want to choose singleness later in the chapter. However, he begins by talking about marriage first. We see that one purpose of marriage is to avoid sexual immorality. As a result, Paul began by talking about the responsibility of the husband to his wife and the wife to her husband. 1 Corinthians 7:3-4 says, “Let the husband render to his wife the affection due her, and likewise also the wife to her husband. The wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband *does*. And likewise the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife *does*.”

The word that is translated “affection” means *good will or kindness*. The only other place where this word is used in the New Testament is in Ephesians 6:5-7 where we read, “Bondservants, be obedient to those who are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in sincerity of heart, as to Christ; not with eyeservice, as men-pleasers, but as bondservants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart, with goodwill doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men.” In these verses, we see that bondservants were to work to please the Lord by doing the will of God from the heart. They were to do the will of God with good will as to the Lord. In the same way, husbands and wives are to do good will to one another as to the Lord because they are carrying out the will of God.

In order to do good will to the Lord from the heart, God says that in the marriage relationship neither partner has authority over their own body. Instead, in a godly marriage each partner is to recognize that their partner has authority over their body. The word that is translated “authority or power” is used four times in the New Testament, two in this verse. The word is also used in 1 Corinthians 6:12 where we read, “All things are lawful for me, but all things are not helpful. All

things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any.” In this verse, we see that Paul said that he would not be brought under the power of any. Paul said it was lawful for him to do anything but he did not want to let any sin get authority or power over him. Here, we see that in a Christian marriage each partner is actually giving the authority over their body to their partner.

We see why God says that each partner is to give this authority to their partner in verse five. 1 Corinthians 7:5 says, “Do not deprive one another except with consent for a time, that you may give yourselves to fasting and prayer; and come together again so that Satan does not tempt you because of your lack of self-control.” Here, we see the purpose of giving authority over our body to our partner is to avoid temptation by Satan. The word that is translated “deprive” means *to rob or defraud or to keep something back by fraud*. Here, we see that husbands and wives are to give the authority over their bodies to their partner so that their partner will not be tempted to sexual sin because they fail to meet the sexual needs of their partner.

The one exception to this instruction would be if both partners agree together to avoid sexual relationships with each other for a short period of time so they can both devote their time to fasting and prayer. However, once the period of fasting and prayer comes to an end they are to resume sexual relationships so that Satan will not be able to tempt either their partner or themselves because of their lack of self-control. Here, we see that sexual relationships in marriage are to be regular in order to meet the needs of the partner because even a time set aside for fasting and prayer will not last too long.

Next, Paul answers the question that was asked about remaining single and never getting married. In 1 Corinthians 6:6-7, Paul said, “But I say this as a concession, not as a commandment. For I wish that all men were even as I myself. But each one has his own gift from God, one in this manner and another in that.” Paul said that the instructions that he had given about marriage were to make the Corinthians aware of the desire of God if they were married. He said that he was not giving them a commandment to marry. Paul realized that there were some benefits to singleness and there were some benefits to marriage. However, God gives some the gift of singleness and others the gift of marriage. We are to realize that either is a gift from God.

However, Paul said that he did wish that all men were even as he. Here, we see that Paul realized that there were some benefits of singleness for those who were serving the Lord. In fact, he was thankful that God had given him the gift of singleness. Paul often had to leave a city on short notice in order to avoid getting killed. Acts 17:13-14 says, “But when the Jews from Thessalonica learned that the word of God was preached by Paul at Berea, they came there also and stirred up the crowds. Then immediately the brethren sent Paul away, to go to the sea; but both Silas and Timothy remained there.” Here, we see that Paul had to get out of the city quickly so that he would not be killed. He realized that if he had a wife and family it would not have been as easy to leave the city immediately in such situations if they were.

In 1 Corinthians 9:5-6, Paul wrote, “Do we have no right to take along a believing wife, as *do* also the other apostles, the brothers of the Lord, and Cephas? Or *is it* only Barnabas and I *who* have

no right to refrain from working?” Here, we see that Paul said the other apostles and the brothers of the Lord all took along a believing wife with them as they traveled. He asked if he and Barnabas were the only two who did not have the right to be married or be supported by others. Here, we see that Paul understood that the gift of marriage was important for the other apostles. The reason that he realized God gave him the gift of singleness was due to the fact that he always stirred up opposition from the unbelieving Jews because he was taking the Gospel to the Gentiles. He had been escaping from unbelieving Jews from the time that he had been let down over the wall at Damascus to escape the Jews that wanted to kill him. At the same time, Paul realized that singleness was not for everyone.

As we go on to 1 Corinthians 7:8-9, we read, “But I say to the unmarried and to the widows: It is good for them if they remain even as I am; but if they cannot exercise self-control, let them marry. For it is better to marry than to burn *with passion*.” Here, we see that Paul said it was fine for the unmarried and for the widows to remain unmarried just as it was fine for him to remain unmarried. The word that is translated “unmarried” is used four times in the New Testament and they are all in this chapter. The other three uses are in verses 11, 32 and 34. Verse 11 says, “But even if she does depart, let her remain unmarried or be reconciled to *her* husband. And a husband is not to divorce *his* wife.” Here, we see that the word “unmarried” is speaking of a woman whose husband is separated or divorced from her.

In 1 Corinthians 7:25, we read, “Now concerning virgins: I have no commandment from the Lord; yet I give judgment as one whom the Lord in His mercy *has made* trustworthy.” Here, we see that the word “virgins” is used to refer to those who have never married. Then, 1 Corinthians 7:39 says, “A wife is bound by law as long as her husband lives; but if her husband dies, she is at liberty to be married to whom she wishes, only in the Lord.” Here, we see that this verse speaks about those who are single due to the death of a partner.

Regardless of the reason why a person is unmarried, we see that verses 32 and 34 say almost the same thing to either a woman or a man as verse 32 and 33 talks about a man and verse 34 a woman. Verse 32-33 says, “But I want you to be without care. He who is unmarried cares for the things of the Lord--how he may please the Lord. But he who is married cares about the things of the world--how he may please *his* wife.” Here, we see that a person that is unmarried can focus their whole attention on their service for the Lord. However, verse 9 says that it is all right for unmarried persons to marry. That verse says, “But if they cannot exercise self-control, let them marry. For it is better to marry than to burn *with passion*.” Here, Paul says it is better for a person to marry than to have strong passions and not be able to exercise self-control. We want to help our children understand that God can use people whether they are single or married. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children learn to answer questions about marriage.