



The Place for Sexual Intimacy In Our Lives (1 Cor. 7:1-7, 25-28, 32-38)

Paul writes in chapter six about the destructive nature of taking our bodies which belong to God and joining them with a prostitute. It is a grievous sin where the Christian takes his body and uses it as an agent of sin. In chapter seven Paul moves on to a discussion of the proper use of sexual intimacy. Verse 1 tells us that he approaches this subject because the Corinthians had questions about it.

The world of first century Corinth had a perverted view of sex. For them sex was open and available while morality was lax and the proper use of the marital relationship was skewed. Likewise, today's world devalues the sexual relationship. Sexual intimacy should be a holy, beautiful, satisfying part of marriage. Instead, today it is paraded around as a self-seeking physical pastime with no moral obligations or responsibility attached. It can be entered into by anyone, with anyone, at any time. But what does the Bible teach?

I. Singleness is Acceptable

Paul answers a question posed to him by the Corinthian Christians by saying, ***“It is good for a man not to have sexual relations with a woman.”*** Literally, Paul is saying that if you are able as a single person to live a celibate life then you ought to do so. If God has gifted you in such a way that you are able to keep your passions in check and do not need a spouse then it is perfectly acceptable to remain single. This advice goes even for those who are already betrothed (vs. 25-28).

It is important here to note that even if the Lord has not spoken on a subject previously (as in verse 25) the words of the apostles and recorded in Scripture are equally binding as if the Lord himself had spoken them (see Luke 10:16).

The apostle Paul indicates that he was unmarried at the time he wrote this passage. Paul teaches that if you are able to remain single and remain pure then it is perfectly acceptable to remain single. In verse 7 Paul describes the ability to remain celibate as a gift. Some people have this gift while others do not. Neither the gift of singleness or being married is “better” as both are allowable by God.



The single life is certainly preferable in some cases. Without a spouse a person can devote more time to God. A single missionary can go into more dangerous locations than might be prudent to take a spouse and children. A single person has less distractions and can devote more time exclusively to God. A single person can live with less money, in a smaller home or apartment. These factors can make it easier for a single person to serve the Lord effectively. For those who are single and do not feel it necessary to marry, and who can thrive without the need for sexual intimacy then it is perfectly acceptable and even preferable to remain single.

1. When is it necessary to marry? v. 2, 36

2. What advantages do single Christians have in their service for the Lord? (vss. 32-35)
3. In what way does the unmarried do even better according to verse 38?
4. Why do married people often push the unmarried into finding a spouse?

II. Sexual Intimacy in Marriage

Sexual intimacy is not something for us to be fearful of discussing in the church. In this lesson we will attempt to discuss honestly and biblically the place of intimacy in marriage, giving it the honour it deserves.

We should preface all our statements about intimacy by saying that it is only a part of marriage and it is a part that cannot work if there are other problems in the marriage. If one spouse is abusive, either physically or verbally there will be difficulty with intimacy. Sexual intimacy will not work when there is a lack of respect or consideration in the marriage. It will not work if there is unfaithfulness in the marriage. Intimacy is a part of marriage; indeed a large part, but you must be a kind loving sharing spouse in other areas if you expect to be loving in the bedroom. With these thoughts in mind let's note four points about sexual intimacy in marriage.



First, Sex was designed by God

This is a rather simple statement with profound implications. God created all that is; and God created us as He wanted us to be. God created us male and female. God created us with the need for intimacy. God created us to enjoy intimacy. He made sex essential to continue the human race and then he commanded mankind to be fruitful and multiply.

5. What facts do we learn about marriage in Genesis 2:18-25?

In Genesis 1:26-31 the Lord made man and woman in His image. He told the man and woman to be fruitful and multiply. And in verse 31, God says that His creation was "very good." The man and the woman, their bodies, and their sharing of the sexual relationship is described as very good.

Second, Sexual Intimacy in Marriage is Required



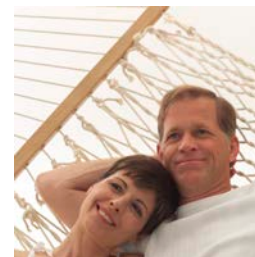
If you are gifted by God with the ability to remain celibate then do not marry. If you marry then you are not permitted to remain celibate. While there are medical reasons why some people cannot be physically intimate, for healthy married men and women physical intimacy is required.

In 1 Cor. 7:3 the Scripture says, ***"the husband should give to his wife her conjugal rights, and likewise the wife to her husband."*** Marriage is designed for the fulfilment of each partner in the marriage. Sexual intimacy is not a right we demand from our spouse, but rather an exclusive gift that we give to our spouse that is precious and holy.

6. How would you answer those who say that sex is only for the procreation of children?

Third, Sexual Intimacy in Marriage is to be Mutually Given

Paul raises the standard for women in verse 4 as he teaches an important principle. He makes it clear that the man's body is not his alone just as he makes the same statement for the woman. In the first century women were rarely if ever placed on an even plane with men. They could be considered objects to use and abuse. Paul is completely evenhanded as he handles this subject and shows that there is to be complete equality in sexual intimacy.



Sexual intimacy in marriage is to be mutually given. The husband fulfils the needs of the wife even as the wife fulfils the needs of the husband. This giving in marriage builds the relationship stronger. Paul shows that intimacy is not something to be demanded, but that it we freely give to our spouse.

This intimate relationship is not only pleasurable, but it is necessary. Sexual intimacy is to be mutually given. Sexual intimacy requires effort. Men must learn to compliment and love their wives if they desire the best of physical relationships. In marriage we are to spend a lifetime learning how to love and please our spouse.

When Paul writes in verse 4 that our spouse has authority over our body he is saying that we relinquish control. We allow someone to touch, care, and caress us. We give ourselves totally to another. Nothing expresses itself in this life so intimately as the giving of oneself totally to his or her husband or wife.

Fourth, Sexual Intimacy is to Be Continuous Throughout Marriage

In verse 5 we learn that the only reason why sexual intimacy can be set aside given is for a short mutually agreeable time of prayer. There may be times in our lives when we need to spend a day or two or three in intense prayer. This may be in times of distress or when faced with a great decision.

7. What is an acceptable reason for a temporary cessation of sexual intimacy in marriage?

8. What stipulations are given to guide this cessation of intimacy in marriage and what are the dangers of long periods lacking sexual intimacy?

Sexual intimacy in marriage is a beautiful, joyous, wonderful blessing of God which can help to draw two people closer together and closer to God. Sexual intimacy outside of marriage is a grievous sin and truly shows that you do not honour the person you are with and that you are willing to dishonour God. The place for sexual intimacy in our lives is within the bounds of marriage.