

Marriage or Single Life? | 1 Corinthians 7:31-40

- Verses 32-33 –
 - There is a blessing of singleness that the evangelical/fundamentalist world has ignored (and, at times, mocked. The mockery comes as a reaction from the legalistic and unbiblical Roman Catholic doctrine of celibacy.
 - Christians should, as Paul does here, celebrate the opportunities of single living in the service of the Lord. This, of course, must be balanced with Paul's earlier warning about fornication (1 Cor. 7:2).
- Verse 34 –
 - Paul speaks the same advice for women as he has in the previous verse for men.
 - Note that in both it cannot be taken as a *sin* for a woman to **please her husband** nor for a husband to **please his wife**. Earlier Paul has argued for this very thing (vv. 1-5). Paul is simply stating that marriage brings obligations of time and energy that a single person can invest into ministry.
- Verse 35 –
 - The apostle Paul did not want to **cast a snare upon you**, as some had done in other places (1 Tim. 4:3).
 - The Greek word for **comely** is εὔσχημον [euschemon], a *good scheme / schematic*.
 - Paul's desire is that they **may attend upon the Lord without distraction**. The word ἀπερισπάστως [aperispastos] is literally, *without having to draw [the sword]*. It originally was used of swords only, but became a word picture of having to fight off every manner of enemy, thus distractions. Whether married or not, every believer should find ways to serve undistracted.
- Verse 36 –
 - There is a great deal of translation difference on this verse. The student of the Word should ask:
 - Who is the virgin - or is there one?
 - **his virgin** (KJV, YLT)
 - "his virgin *daughter*" (NASB)
 - "his virginity" (Darby)
 - "his betrothed" (ESV)
 - Who is beyond their prime...if anyone?
 - **the flower of her age** (KJV, YLT, NASB)
 - "the flower of his age" (Darby)
 - "if his passions are strong" (ESV)
 - Who is getting married?
 - **let them marry** (KJV, Darby, ESV)
 - "let him marry" (YLT)
 - According to the Greek text:
 - It could be *his virgin* or *his virginity*. In light of v. 37, *virginity* fits best (as per Darby).
 - "beyond prime" is in the masculine, thus Darby would be correct.
 - "let marry" is third-person plural, thus "let them marry."

- Verse 37 –
 - Once again, Paul (in vv. 36-37) has taken the utmost care to show that marriage is not a sin, but singleness has some advantage.
 - Note that NASB has created an "eternal daughter" who is not allowed to leave the home and marry.
 - Note that ESV creates an "eternal engagement," which has never been a practice in the church nor does it seem to be advisable.
- Verse 38 - Notice that the KJV adds **her** as the one being given. Young's Literal does a good job, saying, "he who is giving in marriage doth well, and he who is not giving in marriage doth better." Grammatically, "giving *himself* in marriage" (as in Darby) is as much a possibility as "giving *her* in marriage."
- Verse 39 –
 - Paul clarifies that the marriage vows only survive "as long as we both shall live." The widow is **at liberty to be married** to *almost* anyone, but **only in the Lord**, that is, only to a believer.
 - *Note:* Those who hold a theology that says God has selected a single individual to be our spouse would have difficulty with this passage, in which the woman is clearly free to marry any saved man that she wants to.
- Verse 40 - In. v. 12, 25, and 40, Paul clarifies that his speech is not *by revelation* but this should not imply that it is less inspired. It only has to do with the manner of receiving the information.