1 Corinthians Chapter 7 Verses 1 – 2

* This letter, as we have seen, is certainly a letter of encouragement and correction but it was also in response to a letter the church had written to Paul asking him questions. In fact, this letter can be broken into two primary sections being Chapters 1-6 and 7-16 as essentially the rest of the letter Paul is responding to their questions.
* Corinth was a ***particularly worldly and sinful*** city. The Temple of Aphrodite wasn’t just some *grimy brothel.* It was **rich!** Not only that, it was **celebrated!** It really was the defining quality of the city. A first century geographer and historian by the name of *Strabo* wrote that around the year 2 BC that the Temple of Aphrodite in Corinth was so rich that it employed more than a thousand *hetairas!* A *hetairas* wasn’t just a regular prostitute but rather a more expensive, more exclusive thing. The word literally means *“companion.” (I was thinking, I wonder if the honest women would say, “hetairas gonna hetairas,” HA!)*
* So, there were *hatairas* for the rich clientele and then there were countless *pornai* (regular prostitutes) employed by the temple. There were **temple managers, temple grounds keepers, temple janitors, temple cooks, temple promoters**…and then of course there were ***spin-off*** businesses outside of the temple business as well. And so, this city, a majority if not every person of this city was somehow connected either by employment or commerce to this trade.
* For the church, **I can imagine the confusion!** *What do we do with this!?* They were divided and asked for a ruling from Paul. One side espoused that all of the physical body was evil and therefore it didn’t matter what you did because the body was evil anyway. The other side believed too that the body was evil so they completely restrained from sex even in marriage as they didn’t want to do evil. Essentially this is purely Gnosticism which was a popular religion in the first three centuries. Super poplar among Greek and romans philosophers, Gnostics believed, among other things, that all matter is evil, and the non-material, spirit realm is good and that salvation is through knowledge, not faith…Two sides to that coin too. One side was ultra-free-for-all liberalism/anything goes because everything is evil anyway known as ***“Antinomianism”*** while the other school of thought was complete avoidance of all evil aka *physical anything*…known as ***“Asceticism.”***
* It’s probably that someone asked Paul, *“Isn’t it better that we just not do this?”* Paul says *“yes”* essentially in verse one and then concedes the other side saying *“nevertheless”* in verse two. ***Paul sets both sides of the conversation straight*** in this chapter.
* Paul begins in verse 2 saying something I think is **very important.** *Let each man have his own wife, and let each woman have her own husband.* That word *have* is *“echo”* in the Greek. **It speaks of unity.** ***They are two things but the same thing.*** My voice cannot be echoed by anything else but my voice. And there’s a whole sermon series here but in your marriage, you are to let your wife *have* you and vice versa. How? Become, strive towards, work towards and ***fight for the echo effect.*** You say, *“Well I don’t want to echo him.”* Too late, *madam.* **You** married him. *“To have and to hold,”* remember that? That is the literal definition of this word…that’s *echo!*
* I was at work this week and a guy I work with sent an email about taking a few days off this coming week and he said, *“My wife is* ***forcing*** *me to take a few days off!”* Man, I bet it’s a real chore to be married to him! Then, I’m walking into the men’s room at work and a guy walks in behind me on the phone and goes right into a stall. Ok, **NO!** HA! But I could hear and tell that he was talking to his wife. Knowing that I was in there, he said, *“Hey, let me call you back.”* And I thought, *“Thank You, Jesus!”* HA! But then she kept on talking and so he answered a few times and then said, *“Hey let me call you back.”* Again, she kept on going. I thought to myself, man, it must be a **real chore** to be married to her. I don’t want to be like either of those folks. I want to be April’s echo…so I’ll fight for that…

1 Corinthians Chapter 7 Verse 3

* Notice that Paul places *intimacy between a man a woman* squarely within the covenant of **marriage** and **that’s it.** He says, *“It’s good for a man not to touch a woman…unless…it is man and wife.”* And then once they are married, *(“I’ve been really trying babyyyy!”* HA!!) once they are married then it is ultra-important, and Paul will spend the next couple of verses on this, ***it is ULTRA important that affection is rendered.*** Now that word *affection* means what you think it means yes but it also simply is the word ***benevolence***…***good will…kindness.***  The root of this word is *“agreement.”* I like that.
* As Christians we are to Ephesians 4:1-3, *“Walk worthy of the calling with which you were called, with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love, striving to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.”* ***There is no more important place to do that than in your marriage.*** If the marriages fail then the churches will fail. Why? Because we sing to Jesus that *He is all we need*…we espouse a gospel that *life, joy, love, strength, power and purpose are found in a relationship with Jesus*…and yet when we don’t find that in our marriages we object. **Quite the hypocrite…**
* Please, strive for unity in the Body of Christ…and that begins with fighting **for** not with, not against, working for the good will and benevolence and agreement of love in your homes. How do you do that…**render affection man**…, *“My father’s dying words were, ‘Love her as I have loved her’”*, wait, that’s Princess Bride…but love your wives, men…how? **Render her the affection due.** Wives love your husbands, women…how? **Render the affection due.**
* ***All wives are due affection***. Paul didn’t say if she is *young or pretty or king or graceful or submissive*…he simply said ***wife.*** All wives, no matter what, are due affection and likewise husbands also. It’s all a picture of Jesus, man. I am a mess, can’t barely do anything right…I sin, I fall short, I make mistakes, I don’t do as I ought to do…and not one milli-second of any day does God stop pouring out His grace and love on me…Paul continues…

1 Corinthians Chapter 7 Verse 4a

* All men stop this verse right there don’t ya…DON’T YA!!? HA! But the verse continues…

1 Corinthians Chapter 7 Verse 4

* This verse isn’t about giving a man or a woman a weapon to use against your spouse…it’s a revelation. No longer is her body hers…it now belongs to him…BUT…his body now belongs to her…so…it’s not about *I own you now*…it’s we belong to each other.

1 Corinthians Chapter 7 Verse 5

* ***Intimacy is the bond of unity in a marriage.*** Everything else I can experience and express with others…but when it comes to this one area, *that is the one thing that a husband and wife shut the world out of*…and so Paul says do not, I repeat, ***DO NOT deprive the marriage of the bond of unity.*** Unless you both agree to for a time for some reason. How long? Well, how long can you fast? That’s a good rule of thumb. Well, you say, *“I can’t fast for more than about 4 hours….!”* There’s your answer! HA! This is biblical it is ultra-important and the number one reason why marriages in the church fail is right here…

1 Corinthians Chapter 7 Verses 6 – 9

* Paul was no doubt at some point in his life married…and here we have a hint that perhaps his wife had died as he mentions, *“As I am”* in the same breath as ***widows***…and I was thinking about this…I had a dream this week about April and for some reason I was losing her or had lost her and on the backdrop of the sky, I remember it like it was a ***movie screen***, pictures of my almost 18 years with April begin to cascade…
* Sitting in that diner on our first date, standing with me at my college graduation, holding Madison as a newborn, swinging Link in a car seat strapped to a tree limb…all these memories of her and I and they were *all good, all smiling, all meaningful* and I remember feeling the **depth of sorrow** because ***I just didn’t want to do life without her***…I was lost…I woke up, went about my day and wondered why God would give me that dream (because I truly believe God gives me my dreams…most of them – *that one where I was riding a horse-sized cat jumping the Great Wall of China…probably not Him)…*
* But why, why show me this…why let me experience this depth of loss and sorrow…and then I realized…**that was Him.** He lost His bride…*all smiles, all good, all meaningful*…everything to Him…that’s you and that’s me…He lost us to sin…He lost us to the enemy…and He burned with passion…oh not physical passion but ***passion of heart***…**the loss was too great for God**…did you ever think that…**losing you was too much for God**…hurt Him too much…so that He gave Himself to bring you back…and here we stand.
* In my dream I didn’t get April back but I can almost feel what it would have been like for everything gone, everything lost…to being restored…God so loved the world, His bride, you that He gave His only Son…***that whoever would come to Him, render to Him the affection due, to them He would give everlasting life.***