



NEITHER ASCETICISM NOR HEDONISM

OPENING COMMENT

Sex has dominated the cultural narrative. There is not a shortage of examples in our current culture, or the ancient corinthian culture, that we can use to show how sex influences and shapes our everyday lives. As a result we can easily fall into drinking the “cultural cool-aid” and forget what God has intended in marriage, sex, sexuality, and intimacy. Reflecting on Paul’s comments to the Corinthians should help reorient us to that God ordained perspective for relational flourishing.

READ THE TEXT: 1 Corinthians 7:1-5

Now concerning the matters about which you wrote: “It is good for a man not to have sexual relations with a woman.” ² But because of the temptation to sexual immorality, each man should have his own wife and each woman her own husband. ³ The husband should give to his wife her conjugal rights, and likewise the wife to her husband. ⁴ For the wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does. Likewise the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does. ⁵ Do not deprive one another, except perhaps by agreement for a limited time, that you may devote yourselves to prayer; but then come together again, so that Satan may not tempt you because of your lack of self-control.

UNDERSTANDING THE TEXT

1. What issue is Paul addressing in this passage? (vs. 1) What might it reveal about the Corinthian perspective on sex?



2. What is first clear directive Paul gives to the church? (vs. 2b)
3. What is significant about the terms “have *his own wife*” and “*her own husband*”?
4. What is the second directive Paul gives to those who are married? (vs. 3)
5. What is significant about the phrase “husband *should give* to his wife”, which is also inferred for the wife as well?
6. What reason does Paul give for this servant hearted disposition? (vs. 4)
7. How might the attitude prescribed in verse 3 interact with the authority described in verse 4 and vice versa?
8. What is Paul’s only exception to this arrangement? (vs. 5)
9. There are two reasons Paul gives for his counsel, what are they? (vs. 2a, 5b)

APPLYING THE TEXT

1. Paul indicates that intentional, heterosexual, monogamous, regular, selfless sex is a means by which we fight the pervasive temptation to sexual immorality. How is this perspective counter cultural today?
2. Why is it important to understand that one of the functions of a biblical sex life is immunization to sexual temptation?
3. What hurdles might we have to overcome in order to be faithful to the directives given by Paul?
4. Paul makes a clear directive to not deprive one another of sex. How is the strategy of withholding used today and how does it contravene the biblical directive found here?
5. How does embracing this biblical perspective of sex act as an apologetic for the gospel?

BIBLICAL THREAD

1. Genesis 2:18-25 - God indicates that loneliness is not good and the solution is a “one flesh” union.
2. Proverbs 5 - a warning against adultery and encouragement to take joy in your spouse.
3. Song of Solomon - a picture of the beauty of sex, sexual desire, and intimacy between a groom and bride.
4. Matthew 5:27-30 - Jesus clarifies lust and adultery and how seriously it should be taken.
5. Mark 10:6-9 - Jesus reaffirms the Genesis account of “one flesh” union and directs people to remember what God has brought together should not be tampered with.
6. Ephesians 5:22-33 - Marriage intended to mirror the love of Christ for the church.



7. Hebrews 14:4 - The honour and purity of marriage are of eternal significance.

CONCLUSION

Paul clearly outlines that one of the roles of sex within marriage is to immunize us from the pervasive sexual temptation that echos throughout our culture. Yet, it is not simply sex as the world has embraced it, but an intimacy that grants authority of our bodies to our spouses, and orients us toward our spouses needs and desires instead of our own. This is only possible if we understand the larger biblical context. First, the creation account clearly shows a Godly creative intention toward intimacy (Genesis 2) in order to combat loneliness and display God's image. Second, marriage is intended to reveal and mirror the relationship Jesus has with the Church (Ephesians 5). It is only when we begin to see this larger picture that we can see how selfless, intentional, monogamous, heterosexual, sex is both beautiful and useful at keeping us from sin.

SHARE & PRAY

LIFE GROUP VISION:

The goal to meeting together around the word of God is three fold. First, we want to more clearly understand what God is saying to us through his Word and apply it to our own hearts and minds. Secondly, we want to build a loving community with each other to disciple one another toward maturity in Christ. Thirdly, we desire each of us, as ambassadors of Christ, to look outwards to our community and ask how we can bring the truth of the gospel to bear on those whom God has placed in our lives.

