

1Corinthians 18-05-06b

Let's resume our study now in 1 Corinthians and we'll pick up in chapter 7. We've had a good review and run up into the subject matter here and the context beginning at verse 19 of chapter 6. Do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you whom you have from God and you are not your own? That really kind of sums up everything we saw in the first session doesn't it? We're not free to just gratify ourselves, our body is a dwelling place for God's Holy Spirit and as such the business conducted in and around that dwelling should be God's business, God's priorities, God's work, God's opportunities. You were bought at a price and we know from the Apostle Peter that it was a precious price beyond silver and gold, the precious blood of Christ. Therefore glorify God in your body, period.

Everything after that you can cross out, it's not there and it misses the point. His whole point is what you do with your body. So then we pick up now in chapter 7 and in my New King James it's labeled principles of marriage.

The use of marriage, Christ has forbidden to dissolve the bond of it. So all the heading in my particular Thompson chain reference here. Let's read this first nine verses.

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, this is Pornia, let each man have his own wife and let each woman have her own husband. Let the husband render to his wife the affection to her and likewise also the wife to her husband.

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. 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.

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 and one in this manner and another in that. 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. Then he goes on from there to talk about to the married and talking about whether or not to divorce and whether or not the spouse is a believer or not. And he ends up in verse 16, how do you know, O wife, whether you will save your husband? How do you know, O husband, whether you will save your wife? Well, we are going to cover all of that, the first 16 verses of chapter 7 right now.

First of all, he says, concerning the things of which you wrote to me, things plural. And then we get the idea that well, all the rest of this has to do with questions that were asked by people in the Corinthian church, sent in a letter to the apostle Paul. They were written down and sent.

And Paul is going to answer these specific questions, having already given sort of a general coverage, he's going to get specific here. And one of the specifics is, and again, this is a place to put quotes. Remember when he said all things are lawful and it was in quotes, he quoted something that they were saying and that they were believing.

Here, one of the things they ask about is, it is good for a man not to touch a woman. This is sort of a subheading under his responses to questions that they asked him. So, okay, I'm going to turn my, now that I've given you a general introduction, which we see as the first six chapters, I'm going to get down to brass tacks and answer the questions you sent me.

First question, it is good for a man not to touch a woman. We believe this is so. And you can almost add, isn't it? And Paul is going to both affirm and deny this, which is like when you ask a yes or no question and somebody says, both things are true.

That wasn't what I was after. Should I marry or not? Yes. Yes, I should or yes, I shouldn't? Yes.

So, keeping in mind what we just reviewed, are there rules that are going to pertain? Paul says, you're right, we're not under law, we are under discernment. Well, he's not going to turn right around in this next section and start giving a bunch of rules. But don't these look like rules? Well, if you're this and if you're that, then you should do this.

And if you're this and the other, then you should do the other. Doesn't this look like the exact opposite of what he just got through saying? We're not guided by rules, we're guided by discernment of what is beneficial and what doesn't put us under control of something other than God's power. Well, let's see how this plays out.

So, concerning the things of which you wrote to me, this is a large heading. And then the next heading is, how good is it for a man not to touch a woman, basically? So, he says, you're right, it is good for a man not to have contact with, might be a better translation, it isn't a matter of touching. You know, you might take grandma's elbow and help her across the street.

But this is in the sense of intimate contact. It is good for a man not to have intimate contact with a woman, i.e. to forego sexual relations, that this is a euphemism for this type of activity. It's good to not get into that area at all.

Now, why would it ever be good? Well, because there are so many situations where it is not good because the parties are unmarried or they're married to other people or it is done for the wrong reasons. It is an expression of lust and not of love. Even within the bounds of marriage, this can be done badly and wrongly.

There can be abuse within the bounds of marriage. And just because you're married doesn't mean everything is okay. So, there is one way that sexual relationship between a man and a woman can go right and there's about 95 ways it can go wrong or be wrong.

And so, Paul says, you know, basically just from an odd standpoint, if you just avoid the thing

altogether, you could hardly go wrong. But, nevertheless, verse 2, because of pornia, in other words, you say, well, the way to avoid sin in this physical relationship area is just to not have it at all. But, complete abstinence for life is itself going to fuel pornia because you're going to have the buildup of natural urges and passions that will, it's kind of like, well, I'm going to get rid of this thing that causes problems.

I remember they had a mouse problem and so they imported a bunch of snakes and the snakes ate all the mice and then they had a snake problem. And, you know, what do you do about the snakes now? And you had to go have snake hunts because they were just overrun with snakes. Sometimes the solution can be as bad or worse as the problem.

And total abstinence is not for everyone. You can abstain in certain circumstances. You can abstain in certain phases of your life.

But there is a time for abstinence. But most people have a portion of their life, often a goodly portion of their life, where they are married and there is a natural expression and outlet for these God-given instinctive urges. God put them there.

They're a part of our design. This is what keeps the human race creating new generations. And it's not bad in and of itself, but there is a time, there is a set of circumstances in which it is right.

And there are many more times and many more circumstances where it is wrong. So Paul says, yeah, you could just avoid the whole thing and that would be good. But that itself is going to produce its own expressions of pornia because of these inbuilt urges.

And not many people are gifted with the ability to live with those and overcome them and not sin. So because of the potential for pornia in an abstinence situation, let each man have his own wife and let each woman have her own husband. So there is a point at which people should pair up in an opposite gender fashion and find legitimate, healthy, and fruitful expression of these God-given biological urges and functions.

So there is an ideal that says, wouldn't it be great if this just wasn't even a part of life? And there are people who have actually said, you know, we'll make a eunuch of somebody. This is what happened to Daniel and Hananiah and Mishael and Azariah in Nebuchadnezzar's wise man school. We'll just emasculate these guys and we'll just take that out of the equation.

And that was done quite regularly in the ancient world. We don't want these guys to be suborned or seduced or otherwise compromised. So we'll just take that off the table and that will be good.

And so that's what he's talking about here. Yeah. In the abstract, it would be good.

However, it can itself, total abstinence for life can be a source of and a cause of pornia. So a better route is, and the normal route is, you know, at an appropriate stage of life, you pair off and get married. And in that marriage, there should be normally a regular exercise of those

functions and urges that you should do what people usually do.

There's no rule about frequency. There's no rule about type or kind or anything else. It's just, there should be mutual blessing.

There should be mutual regard in this area. And the husband should be thinking primarily about the wife's needs. Verse three.

And the wife should be primarily thinking about the husband's needs. This is not, let's get married so that we can pursue a road of self-gratification. This is marriage that as a part of the relationship is an opportunity to be a blessing, to serve, to help, to accommodate, and to make sure that someone is not being stressed or led into temptation by their urges because you've decided X, Y, or Z. So biblically speaking in the area of discernment, notice that this isn't really rule based.

There's not frequency or descriptions of any kind. This is kind of like, you know, you should have elders in your church. It doesn't say how many for how long do they serve terms? Are they elected? Are they appointed? Are they, he says, look, you need elders.

And this is the kind of guy they need to be. Well, young people of opposite genders should marry each other and have normal, healthy intercourse where each is looking out for the other as their primary concern. That's the guideline.

And under that you use your discernment. That's the objective and that's the goal. That's the standard pattern.

There can be exceptions to that. But this is the usual. This is the normal.

Verse four, 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. Now this impinges not only on marriage and informs the previous verse that the husband is looking out for the wife's needs, recognizing that he belongs to her for that purpose.

And she gets to say what does and doesn't meet her needs. He doesn't get to say, well, here's what I think, and I declare that I have met your needs. In the area of helping one another and being a blessing to one another, the other person gets to say yes and no or more of that or less of that or whatever.

You can fill in those blanks. But the whole idea here is that even for the husband in this area, there is submission and there is restraint and there is care and there is love and there is consideration, self-sacrificial if need be. Something's uncomfortable.

Something's inconvenient. It's a bad time. It's not a helpful thing in whatever area.

Your first and foremost priority as a husband is the well-being and happiness of the wife in this area in every possible context and way. And the same with the wife. Her complete concern

needs to be, how is my husband doing? And because each is concerned with the other, there will be a balance and there will be a certain amount of giving that is not excessive, that isn't so sacrificial.

One or the other is going to say, look, this would make me happy, but it isn't going to work for you, so let's not. And again, this is really common sense and it is an expression that requires first and foremost communication. You can't assume.

You can't just have a belief. If you are going to do what verse 3 and verse 4 say, as unto the Lord and do it well, there has to be communication. Sometimes you have to ask.

If you get the impression that maybe all is not well, but you say, well, but I've just got this overriding drive. Well, you need to stick the overriding drive out of sight and be attentive to the other person. And that's what this is saying.

And the wife not having authority over her own body, the husband does. Well, if the husband is heeding the commands of scripture and loves his wife as he loves himself and as the Lord loves the church, then he's not going to abuse that ownership, that possession. You don't abuse something that you prize and that you truly love and value and recognize the worth of.

You don't abuse it. You don't tear it down. You don't denigrate it.

You don't vex it or tax it or otherwise cause it harm. A guy that will spend all weekend washing and waxing his car has the right idea. He may just be needing to check and be sure that he is exercising that much and more care toward his wife and same with the wife toward her husband.

So verse 5, do not deprive one another except with consent for a time. In other words, if you're a husband or you're a wife, you do not have the right to use sex as a weapon or as a punishment or as a means of influence to get what you want or to stop something you don't want. You're not allowed.

It is prohibited in scripture to leverage sexual availability in a marriage. If you do that, you are going to suffer the wrath of God in ways that only God knows. Do not deprive one another except under two conditions.

Both of you think it's a good idea and it is of limited duration. You don't get to say, well, we're married, but let's just be live-in partners. Even if you both consent, it is for a time.

And not only that, but the third and overriding condition is it can be both of you agree for a time and it has to be for this purpose to spruce up, enhance, invigorate your spiritual life. This physical thing is occupying too much of our time, too much of our attention. We're doing too much in that line and our spiritual life is suffering.

It's like your diet. I'm going to fast. Well, if you're going to fast as a couple, you would do it by

mutual consent for a time.

So this is sort of a fasting in this physical relationship area. And you give yourself to fasting, you're cutting a lot of things out, not just your normal relationship in this area, but also you're going to actually not eat some meals. You're going to really have a time of focus and dedication and prayer and concentration to ensure that spiritual health is first and foremost.

You're looking to the body of Christ, to the exclusion of the needs of the physical body. But because you two are one flesh, you do it together. You do it united.

The two become one flesh. So any fasting you partake in has to be agreed upon by both and it has to be limited so that you don't do damage to either one of you or both of you. Then Paul says, come together again so that Satan does not tempt you because of your lack of self-control.

Ah, we find that this issue of pornia back up in verse two, because of pornia, let each man have his own wife, because otherwise self-control can be stretched beyond the breaking point. You cannot control your urges. You can't control your passions.

You're going to go down dark and bad roads and engage in dark and bad behavior. So marriage is the solution. And of course, there's no time where self-control is more of an issue than when you are in your prime late teens and early twenties.

It takes a tremendous amount of self-control and your focus needs to be, you know, it's just like any other problem. If you've got an issue that's pressing you, you need to be looking toward the ultimate resolution of that, which in this case is marriage. So that Satan does not tempt you because of your lack of self-control.

Self-control is the issue. He doesn't say because it sets a bad example or because it makes you cranky or because of anything else. He says, Satan is going to start using your lack of self-control against you.

There will be an opportunity for your body to conspire with the principalities and powers to overwhelm your new man. So if you're going to quit, what does he say? If you're going to deprive the old man, you need to be sure and be feeding the new man. That fasting and abstinence needs to be on an occasion of spiritual focus, prayer, cycling that wisdom and doing this together, studying together, conversing together about spiritual truth and about its application in specific circumstances.

If you're going to forego natural activities, you better be doing it on account of spiritual activities. Well, nothing for you for the rest of the month. I'm not going to cook your supper and I'm not going to be in the same room with you, much less the same bed, until you mend your ways.

You've got to have reconciliation by the time the sun goes down. When supper's supposed to

hit the table and when it's time to climb into the same bed, issues better be resolved. Otherwise, God's going to take an interest in the sanctity of the marriage that he has blessed and that he recognizes, and more about that coming up.

And Paul says, I say this as a concession, not as a commandment. Why does he say that? He says, remember what I said a few paragraphs ago about we're not under law, it's discernment? And you remember the nature of that discernment? You are here to be a blessing to others and you are here to represent Christ and not be a representative of something else that has taken you over and controls you. Matthew was telling me about these flies that come down and plant an egg in an ant, and it takes over the ant.

The little larvae grows and crawls up the neck and gets in the head and eats the brain, and the ant is useless. Well, Paul is saying, don't be the ant. Don't let yourself be taken over by something and suborned and subverted, and now you're a threat to those around you.

Those things hatch out, now the rest of the ants are at risk. So, I say this as a concession, not as a commandment. He says, I'm not giving you law and saying I was wrong, you are under law.

He says, you've got to adapt this to your own specific circumstance. Having said this, concession and not command, he is now going to give some example circumstances and how the application of this truth of consideration and of being a benefit and of connecting Christ to your situation instead of dragging the darkness of a situation into the realm of Christ. He's going to give examples.

So, now we have basically these four different situations. The first one we've already looked at, and this is in verses two through seven, and this is the case of married couples where these people are two growing healthy believers married to each other. They are faithful believers.

They are pistos believers. They have and exercise faith. And this is why he invokes the Lord and says these are things that are good, two through seven.

Now, what can you say in verses two and three? Because of the possibility of temptation and overwhelming someone's self-control, a man needs a woman, a woman needs a man. Husband needs to take care of the wife, wife needs to take care of the husband. Husband needs to recognize that in that marriage relationship and in this area of it, he is there as her possession and she is there as his possession.

So, what do we learn from this? A, let each man have his woman and let each woman have her man. So, what would you say? You can sum it up in a single word. Marriage in the realm of physical activities of this nature is exclusive.

One man, one woman, one bed, that's it. It is exclusive. That's what you draw out of verses two and three.

It's them or nobody for the married faithful. Secondly, in verses four and five, the authority

issue and the depriving issue, this is consideration. The primary overarching defining discerning principle here is A, it is exclusive.

B, it is an expression of consideration. It is the other person first. Love is sacrificial to self and beneficial to the other.

And then thirdly, in verses six and seven, he says, I say this as a concession, not as a commandment. This is not a hard and fast set of rules. You can't bring the rule book and wave it at the other and say, you have to go to bed with me, wife or husband, because look what it says right here.

This is an area of discernment. And if you've got a disagreement or a difference of opinion about it, this is something you have to work out in the realm of concession. I may not totally agree, but I love you.

And I recognize that I have a responsibility here. I've got the outlines. And so the specific way this expresses itself is concession, not command.

And in the realm of interpersonal relations of the physical nature between a husband and a wife, it is a matter of negotiation and concession and agreement and harmony and what promotes peace. If there is a lack of peace, there's a problem. When all is said and done, wake up the next morning and ready to face the day.

There should be peace, not conflict. There should be love and mutual appreciation and the glory of Christ in the midst of the marriage, not disharmony and disaffection, disagreement, somebody feeling used, somebody feeling triumphant, somebody feeling enslaved, somebody feeling dominant. Something is wrong and you've got to get into this area of concession and fix it.

Because no command is going to be able to fix it. You've got to fix it yourselves. So that is section one, married faithful couples, verses two through seven.

The second section covers the unmarried and widows. This is a shorter section, verse 10 and 11. And by the way, you can put with the area of concession, Matthew 19, 8 through 12.

You can flip there real quickly. This is the Lord speaking. Why did Moses command to give a certificate of divorce and put a woman away? He said, Moses, because of the hardness of your hearts permitted you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it was not so.

And I say to you, whoever divorces his wife except for Pornia and marries another commits Pornia and whoever marries who is divorced, actually, this is more key, I think adultery, commits adultery. And whoever marries her who is divorced commits adultery. Whoa, that's pretty sobering stuff.

His disciples said to him, if such is the case of the man with his wife, it is better not to marry. It

is better not to marry. And Jesus doesn't disagree.

He says, not all can accept this saying, only those to whom it has been given. For there are eunuchs who were born thus from their mother's womb. There are eunuchs who were made eunuchs by men.

And there are eunuchs who have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake, i.e. those who exercise self-control, who are not married or for whatever other reason are not in a normal marriage with the variable frequency of sexual relations that would normally characterize that relationship. They made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake. Notice, not for any other reason except a spiritual priority.

He who is able to accept it, let him accept it. So when Paul says in verse 7, 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. It is dictated and defined and determined by what God has given us by way of gift and opportunity.

Who is the opposite number involved in the marriage? What is their situation? There can be health issues. There can be any number of things that guide this. And Paul says, this is not command, it is concession.

And you go back to what the Lord said, the one area that he gives to the married, and it's going to come up in verse 10 and 11. He's going to come back to the married. I gave the wrong verses for the unmarried and widows.

They're in verses 8 and 9, but he's going to come back to this in just a second. But what does it say in 8 and 9? 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, this is the second time we had it at the end of verse 5 and we have it again.

If self-control becomes an issue, let them marry. It is better to marry than to burn. And it says with passion in New King James, cross it out.

It is better to marry than to burn. Paul left that purposely like a double-edged sword. It can mean burn with passion.

It can also mean burn in judgment. It can also mean the wood, hay and stubble fire. It can also mean the flames of disciplinary reaction from God on someone who gets into pornography, gets into promiscuity, gets into fornication, gets into adultery and disrupts people around them because in their unmarried status they cannot control themselves.

If you are unmarried and you are single and then you engage in sexual behavior, you have implicated at least one other person in some fashion and you are now a problem not only to yourself but to others. And God says, you find somebody that will marry you and you get it within the bounds of a normal relationship or there will be burning. He doesn't say just sit there

and go up in flames because you are so overcome with your passions.

He says it is better to marry than to burn. And that is burn in any number of ways. Then he comes back to the married.

To the married I command, yet not I but the Lord. And notice these married people that he has been talking to and returns to are the faithful. If he is giving a command to the Lord, the only person that is going to respect it and pay attention to it is a faithful growing believer.

Disobedient wayward believers don't care what the Lord says. So when he says I am giving you a command, what he has just said is all concession. Now we are in the realm of command.

And there are certain things that are unlawful. And what he says here, the Lord says, now how does he know what the Lord says? We don't know that he had a copy of Matthew 19. What do we know he did have a copy of? How does he know what the Lord said about divorce? Well, try Luke chapter 16 verse 18.

Paul traveled with Luke. Luke was working on his gospel during that time. And we know that the content of Luke's gospel was available to the Apostle Paul among other sources.

Paul had spoken with people who had been with the Lord in his earthly ministry. But we know that Dr. Luke traveled with him for some time. And Luke had already been amassing the stuff that he was putting together for Theophilus.

We don't know but that Theophilus was the Apostle Paul. In any case, you look at Luke chapter 16 and verse 19, I'm sorry, verse 18. He's been talking about the law and the prophets.

And John, easier for heaven and earth to pass away than for one tittle of the law to fail. Whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery. And whoever marries her who is divorced from her husband commits adultery.

And adultery is on the second tablet of stone, the commands that transcend even the law for the nation of Israel. The Ten Commandments are recognized as transcendent and timeless, even the one about the Sabbath. It's just a matter of what your Sabbath is, depending on which dispensation you're in.

You are under no freedom to disregard the Sabbath. It's just not a Saturday Sabbath. In the same way that we're not free to disregard the law, we just have to put it in the context of informing our discernment under grace.

So Paul says there is a command from the Lord about divorce. And a believing husband and a believing wife, those who are believers of faith, regardless of how different their understanding may be, if they are growing believers, if they are seeking believers, if they are people of faith, they are prohibited from divorcing, ever. Now, who would divorce anyway, in spite of that, and they are a believer? Somebody who is no longer a faithful believer.

It's sort of a truism. If you're a believer who loves the Lord and wants to please Him, you're not going to do what the Lord says don't do. The Lord says don't divorce.

You're going to find a way around it, no matter what, because that's what you do when you're a faithful believer. So the only person who would violate this command is somebody who, by definition, is not a faithful believer. But this is an encouragement to believers who have marriage troubles to go to the Lord together and work it out.

There is a solution for faithful believers, always. The solution for faithful believers is never to dissolve their marriage, regardless. Because if the power of God is in her life and His life, there is a way forward, always.

Grace greater than all our sin. If God can raise the dead, God can put life in a dead or dying marriage. It's just definitional.

So believers who have any ambition whatsoever of pleasing the Lord do not divorce, ever. The only time a divorce happens in a situation like that is when one or both parties are apostate, faithless. Now, that's where he is going to turn his attention next.

So we've seen the married couples in verses 2-7, and the normal, healthy, sexual part of the marriage is exclusive, there is consideration, and there is concession. The unmarried should remain as they are unless self-control is an issue. Then they should fall in love and get married.

They need to marry somebody with whom they can do A, B, and C above. Be exclusive, have consideration, and have that concessionary adaptation for spiritual purposes. When Paul says, better to marry than to burn, he's not saying any old marriage.

You need a marriage like the one he just described. And if you can't find that, then you've got to exercise self-control until you do. Pray to God, make provision, Lord, my self-control is about to break, I need somebody to marry.

Put it in God's hands. God makes provision in every other area, He's not going to suffer the righteous to be moved. And if you are righteous and you care, God will either give you greater self-control or He'll give you somebody to share a life with, one or the other.

So unmarried and widows remain unmarried unless and until you fall in love and get married. So now he's back to the married. There's a charge from the Lord, Paul knows, because of Luke 16, 18.

And couples who are going to heed this charge are both faithful, growing believers by definition. Now to the rest, this begins in verse 12. To the married I command, don't depart.

Even if she does depart, don't breach the marriage. You can have a separation, but you can't marry anybody else. You can't formalize a divorce and go marry someone else if you're both growing believers.

But to the rest, now who are the rest? We've covered the married, happy, faithful, growing believers, and we've covered the unmarried and widows. Who's left? If you've got the married and unmarried, who's left? To the rest I say, well, that's how we know that he is speaking specifically to two pistia believers in the first section. Because he says, if any brother has a wife who is, and it says does not believe, that's not what it says.

It's not a matter of does not believe. This is who is faithless. Faithless.

Now faithless is a broad term. She could be faithless to the husband. She could be faithless to the Lord.

She could be a believer or an unbeliever in terms of ultimate eternal destination. But her status in this marriage at this time is faithless. No faith, no active spiritual power, life, regard, interest, commands of the Lord.

I don't give two hoots and a rain barrel about that. What Paul says, I don't care about that. Faithless, no faith.

Now, many believers are faithless, what we call believers. They're going to end up in eternal realms, but they're faithless. They are a pistia.

They are without or lacking faith. What did Jesus say to the disciples? Oh ye of little faith. If you had a mustard seed of faith, you wouldn't be acting this way.

They're essentially faithless in that circumstance. Well, if you're faithless in the marriage and this person is completely inconsiderate and disregarding of the other party, they are completely interested in going outside the marriage to meet their needs. They have no interest in Christ.

They have no interest in their spouse. They are faithless. To the faithless, if a brother has a wife, notice he doesn't say if a brother has a sister, you know, in the congregation, there's a brother and a sister who can't get along.

He says there is a brother and there is a faithless woman. If she's willing to live with him, let him not divorce her. And a woman who has a husband who is faithless, if he is willing to live with her, let her not divorce him.

For the faithless husband is sanctified by the wife and the faithless wife is sanctified by the husband. Otherwise, your children would be unclean, but now they are holy. In other words, God will treat the faithless spouse as though they were faithful for the sake of the faithful spouse and for the sake of the children.

God is going to look at that household and the wrath of God is not going to descend on it, even though there is a faithless, perhaps, believer there. They may be an unbeliever. They may be a believer, but they certainly don't have any active or healthy relationship with God.

But God will not deal with them. He will not discipline them and He will not cause any cursing by association because of the presence of the two are one flesh. And you remember our memory verse out of Philippians, you know, to the extent that things are noble and of good report, God looks at the marriage and says, well, to the extent that there's a person of faith in it, I'm going to treat it that way.

I'm going to disregard the faithless half. And as long as those people are willing to go along and get along, God will not put any consequence or judgment on that household for the faithless half. He'll honor the faith that is there.

And of course, He does that with us anyway, even as individuals. God so often, especially when we're regular in confessing our sins, He looks at what's there, not where we fail and what we lack. So verse 15, but if the faithless departs, let him depart.

A brother or a sister is not under bondage in such cases. And the word bondage there is from *doulos*, *doulo*. You're not enslaved.

Now, let's say a woman is married to a faithless man who beats her. She is not enslaved and doesn't have to sit there and take that. And it doesn't matter if he professed Christ as a child or whatever else.

If he is a faithless man and there is physical abuse in that relationship, then she is free not only to leave, but to divorce. Faithless is the issue. And the whole key is understanding what *apisteia* means.

Do a word study. I don't have time to do it here. You can do it.

Get a Strong's, look up all of the context for *apisteia*, faithless. You will find that the blackness of darkness is reserved for faithless believers in the eternal future. You will find that there is weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth for the *apisteia* who are going into the eternal future.

You can be a believer and be faithless. This isn't saving faith. This is living faith.

This is daily faith. This is faith that expresses itself in love, sacrificial to others. If you are a curse and a blight and a threat and a danger to others of the household of faith, you are faithless and you can be separated from and you can be divorced from.

The faithless is sanctified if they are amenable, if they are not doing harm. The unbeliever departs, let him depart, the faithless. If a brother or sister is not under slavery in such cases, not enslaved, look up that word enslaved.

Look at Titus chapter 2 and verse 3 where Paul talks about a man, remember he is talking about the qualifications of an elder and he says not given too much wine. It doesn't say given to, it says enslaved to wine. This very same word, Titus 2.13. You can't have leadership in the church

by somebody who is not a slave of Jesus Christ.

He is a slave to wine or he is a slave to anger. 2 Peter 2.19 uses this same word. Peter says that which overcomes you, enslaves you.

If you let something be your boss, if you let something take over your self-control, take away what belongs to Christ, what belongs to your spiritual life, you are enslaved. 2 Peter 2.19. So, you are not enslaved for how do you know, notice it says, but God has called us to peace. If there is no peace and peace cannot be achieved, to the extent that it is possible, to the extent that it is up to you, Paul says in another place, live in peace with everybody.

If there is no possible way that you can achieve peace in that relationship, which will never be the case for two faithful believers, there will always be a way to find peace. The peace of God that surpasses all understanding will keep your hearts and minds when you are in Christ Jesus and you will find a way forward that involves peace. When peace is not achievable, you are enslaved and it's time to leave.

Now, notice verse 16. How do you know, O wife, whether you will save your husband? How do you know, O husband, whether you will save your wife? And this has often been interpreted to mean that you should stick around regardless of how bad it gets because they might see your humble suffering martyr example and get saved. This in Greek says the exact opposite.

If that was what this was saying, there would be a negative in here. How will you know whether you will not save your wife? How do you know that that will never happen? This is the positive. And the person is thinking, if I stick around, I can get them saved.

Paul says, you don't know that. You can't know that. Sticking around, taking abuse and hoping that they're going to get saved, you're a nut to do that.

How can you know that by sticking in a bad relationship, that person is going to turn around and that you're going to deliver them from the passions and the control of evil that they are subject to, that they are expressing, that they are spreading? How do you know, O wife, that you're going to stick around and deliver him? How do you know, O husband, that you're going to put up with this shrieking harpy and in some way deliver her from her passions? You can't deliver anybody. Who is the deliverer? Who is the savior? Neither is there salvation, same word, in any other. There's none under the name that are having given among men whereby we must be delivered.

You can't deliver somebody by sticking around. If they don't know you by now, you've been married, that your continued martyrdom and putting up with abuse is not going to save them. This is not a call to endure in the hope that they might come to Christ.

This is, you're foolish to use that as a rationalization to stick around in a place where you are spreading disharmony, disunion. You are sponsoring and you are enabling evil. Don't enable under the notion that you're going to save somebody.

You can't save anybody. Christ is the savior. Jesus saves.

Read the sign on the church there in LA. So, in conclusion, our spiritual life does not dictate any particular answer in all circumstances. Our spiritual life gives us wisdom and discernment to apply what we know to be true and the actual commands of scripture to our specific circumstance.

And if you go to Philippians, I wish I had time to go there, but I'll do it really quickly. Just turn very quickly for a closing thought to Philippians chapter 4. Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians. Chapter 4. This is the memory verse I quoted earlier.

Start in verse 6. Be anxious about nothing. In everything, by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God. Having a tough patch, having a difficult time, wondering what applies, what pertains, especially in the realm of marriage or personal relationship.

And keep in mind, in the same way that the whole promiscuity and pornography thing in Corinth can be universalized, it is an example of greater truths. So is this thing in marriage. This could be other relationships.

This can be other situations where you have an obligation and you have a mutual commitment and now it is being threatened on one or both sides. Marriage is a convenient example, but this is not exclusively applicable to marriage. It's any case where you are connected to others and you figure out whether they are faithful or faithless and whether you have to continue that commitment or whether you are free to discontinue it.

Be anxious about nothing. In everything, by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

You will continue to be that connected conduit to the Lord Jesus Christ, those things that are eternal, those things that partake of the spiritual body, the spiritual priorities. You will continue to be shining that light. And if it is impossible for you to do that, you need to revisit your assumptions about staying in that situation.

Finally, brethren, to the extent that things are true, to the extent that things are noble, to the extent that they are just, pure, lovely, of good report, any virtue, any praise, focus on that. When all of those things leave, so do you. If there's any of that that remains, focus on that.

Maintain your peace. Cultivate your connection to Christ. But when all of those things are gone, so am I. Then look at verse 9. The things which you learned and received and heard and saw in me, these do, and the God of peace will be with you.

You couldn't have a more beautiful chiasm. Verse 7. The peace of God will guard your hearts and the God of peace will be with you. The peace of God and the God of peace.

To the extent that it is up to you, live in peace with all. What does he say in our chapter in Corinthians? God has called us to peace. There has to be peace.

You've got to have peace about your decision and about your commitment, about what you are doing to live in a marriage, to save a marriage, to save any commitment relationship. You have to be able to function as a believer. You have to be able to shine the light of Christ.

You have to be a source of peace and a place of peace. And you yourself have to find that peace of God. And you have to be connected to the God of peace.

If those things are impossible, you are in the wrong place and you need to get out and somebody faithless is involved. Because where faithful people are involved, peace will prevail. You pursue peace with all.

Can't achieve the peace? Not just, well, I don't feel peace because my secretary is so beautiful and my wife is so plain or the pool man is so gorgeous and my husband is so dumpy. I just can't get any peace. That's not the kind of peace we're talking about.

It is the peace of God and it is the God of peace. It is a spiritual priority. It is a spiritual discernment that dictates how we act and what we do.

And it is always love that is sacrificial towards self, beneficial towards others, love that is committed to the glory of Christ, the peace of God and the God of peace. Well, we've covered that section, the first half of 1 Corinthians 7. We'll pick up in the second half next time. Father, thank you for the truth of your word.

Thank you for the light that it shines on our path and the information that it gives us, the illumination that it provides so that we can exercise discernment and we can make our own application under the presence and guiding power of your Holy Spirit, the words that have come from the Lord Jesus and from the apostles who have provided these wonderful areas of understanding for us in all of the different aspects of our lives, both public and private, both minor and major, those that are individual and those that are collective. We pray that as we reflect on these things, as we think about them in the days ahead, as we review these other passages that impinge on the same subject, that your Holy Spirit will enliven it, make it real and give us perspicacity and that wisdom of discernment to know how we ourselves should think, act, and decide in areas that are governed by these principles. We pray that in all things the Lord Jesus will be glorified and that he will be glad when we are gathered to him on that wonderful and soon coming day when we are united with him and hopefully presented before your own presence.

We pray all these things in Jesus' name. Amen.