MESSY GRACE: **1 Cor wk 7 – Sensitive Issues**

**A church struggling to live for Jesus in a culture pulling them in another direction, dealing with tough issues – this one especially.**

**Today another PG13 passage. Few things as sensitive as some of the issues today. Diff opinions of Christians - can disagree on.**

**Today a chapter easily isolated and taken out of framework.**

**Context - context - context. We must remember who Paul is writing to and follow the train of thought. Not isolating verses.**

**1 Corinthians 7:1 Now for the matters you wrote about… (He’s been addressed things he heard about - now addressing a few issues they wrote to him about.)**

**Four Issues: Three questions about marriage**

**AND one about the single life vs the married life.**

**We have a very real relationship dilemma in our country and churches. Sex is glorified - marriage is mocked / downgraded - divorce is rampant**

* **In church sex is taboo to talk about (you’re thinking about it)**
* **Sometimes in church single people are looked down on.**
* **Sometimes in church divorced people are looked down on.**

**(CT Mag) – sex, marriage, and singles**

* **Past 35 yrs single female households risen 65% / single men risen 120%**
* **Fewer than half of all households are married (health of nation = family)**
* **50% of marriage end in divorce. I contest only half of the rest are happy**
* **Age of marriage 1970: 21 yr women / 23 yr men. Today: 26 women / 28 men**
* **As a result – 90% of all adults have sex before marriage. (60 / 70% adultery)**
* **80% of Christians have sex before marriage.**

**Culture and church are failing at this. Today Paul deals w/ 3 hot issues: a sex issue, a separation issue, a divorce issue**

**Keep in mind, Paul was once married - Phil 3:4-6, Acts 26:10.**

**As a pharisee and Sanhedrin he would have had a wife. We don’t know what happened to her – He knew both life seasons personally.**

**1st Question - A Sex Issue**

**Keep in mind Corinth / Rome was a sexually charged culture – sexual immorality, sex temples, polygamy, adultery – normal.**

**They were (and we are) instructed by God to not to have sex outside or before marriage (1 Co 6:18, Ep 5:3 Flee sexual immorality – not even a hint…)**

**So, they thought… How about if we never had sex at all - even married!**

**1 Corinthians 7:1 Now for the matters you wrote about: “It is good for a man not to have sexual relations with a woman.” (Translated diff ways incorrectly – NLT)**

**Keeping the Bible in context, this could never mean Paul is promoting full abstinence - that would contradict the God / Bible. \*\* And it was against Roman law during the time.**

**That quote is the matter they wrote about – that’s the issue. Is it good for a person to never ever have sex & abstain from all sexual relations?**

**1. Should a Christian be abstinent – in marriage?**

**Why ask that? In Corinth, some thought they were more spiritual in their sexual liberty outside marriage. (1 Cor 6) Some thought they were more spiritual to never have sex even in marriage. (1 Cor 7) And some were getting arrogant about being married - more spiritual (1 Cor 7)**

**Paul explains all three are Satan’s plan to divide us**

**(Paul’s answer - is no, if your married) 1 Cor 7:2 But since sexual immorality is occurring, each man should have sexual relations with his own wife, and each woman with her own husband. (referring to Gen, God design for marriage - BTW – this clearly is anti-polygamy – all are singular husband / wife)**

**To the question – “is it more spiritual to never ever have sex?” He first response is… Heck no!**

* **No - sex is God’s design, not a dirty word**

**God designed us with this body and its desires. Understand this - Sex is not a dirty word – it’s something God created.**

**God was not surprised when it 1st happened, whao! Did not see that! It is God given, God created, God made and God declared good! In fact, one of God’s first 3 commands: work garden (job), avoid tree (live a holy life), and multiply (have sex with your wife)**

**Some Christians in Corinth were calling it dirty, just like some religious people today. Generations are learning as they go and it’s not working!**

**1 Cor 7:3 The husband should fulfill his marital duty to his wife, *(affection due her*, not just sexual) and likewise the wife to her husband. (mutual responsibility to each other) 4 The wife does not have authority over her own body but yields it to her husband. (husband / wife = singular) In the same way, the husband does not have authority over his own body but yields it to his wife. (I guess you better ask your spouse before you get that tattoo)**

* **No - if you are married, you should be intimate with your spouse**

**Intimacy is an important part of marriage – by design for procreation, protection, and pleasure.**

**Some are unable - this does not mean that a marriage where sex is not possible is dead. Discover - what is best for you to create intimacy?**

**Paul is basically saying don’t use Jesus as an excuse to deprive your spouse of intimacy.**

**BTW - V3-4 say when married - your bodies belong to each other (sorry Nikol)**

**This was profound. In their culture, men dominated women.**

**Women were objects, married 12-14 yrs old. Allowed to kill an adulteress woman but was acceptable for men. Then God says – marriage is a mutual relationship of submission & serving!**

**1 Cor 7:5 Do not *(stop)* deprive *(defrauding, cheating)* each other (of sexual activity – Notice Sex is not just to make babies, but also to fulfill our God designed desires – and notice how both men and women are to enjoy it.) 5 Do not deprive each other except perhaps by (3 reasons) mutual consent (an agreement) and for a time, (arranges time limit) so that you may devote yourselves to prayer. (a spiritual reason)**

**Withholding sex is not for punishment, manipulation, control.**

**3 reasons: mutual consent, designated time, to seek God**

**5b Then come together again (goal of a separation is to come back together) so that Satan will not tempt you (to cheat or commit sexual immorality – sex is protection from temptation) because of your lack of self-control. 6 *(But)* I say this as a concession, not as a command.**

**God is not commanding you to abstain from sex in marriage for any reason even spiritual reasons, but there is an allowance for it.**

**\*\* 1 Cor 7:7-9 Addresses marriage and the single person - we will address next week… in v10 continues with…**

**Question - A Separation Issue**

**2. To be more focused on God should we separate?**

**You might see this as a silly question… but they were doing it.**

**They were wondering, is it more spiritual to be single?**

**1 Cor 7:10 To the married (Christian couples) I give this command (not I, but the Lord): (meaning Jesus talked about it - Matt 5, 19) A wife must not separate from her husband. 11 But if she does, (separate) she must remain unmarried or else be reconciled to her husband. And a husband must not divorce his wife.**

**Christians asking should I get divorced / separate to be closer to God?**

* **No - but if you do separate, work towards reconciliation**

**Sadly – a verse used to keep women in abusive marriages.**

**(Matt 2:13-15, 10:23; Lu 14:5, Acts 14:5-6)**

**If you are in an abusive relationship – get out. And don’t; look back. If you are in a abusive marriage – get out and seek help.**

**Biblical separation: Remember Paul just gave 3 concessions**

**1. Mutual agreement, 2. A set time, 3. Get your life w/ God figured out. But – all with the plan to come back together.**

**If you do separate for one of the reasons mentioned – don’t get a divorce - work toward reconciliation.**

**People have told me, "God doesn't want me married to this person any more" or "God brought someone better to me," they are wrong and not speaking from God at all. God never recognizes such reasons.**

**Christians marriages divorcing to pursue God call or will – Paul says you are crazy? No! How misguided.**

**If Corinth Christians started thinking being single was more spiritual, imagine how shunned those married to an unbeliever felt.**

**Question - A Divorce Issue**

**3. If I became a Christian and my spouse does not, can I get a divorce?**

**A very real and painful dilemma for many Christians today.**

**Rome culture: woman are objects, husbands were sexually active, women had to be pure – allowed to kill an unfaithful daughter / spouse. To top it off - illegal to remain unmarried (taxed into poverty). 18 mths.**

**1 Cor 7:12 To the rest (mix-matched couples) I say this (I, not the Lord): (meaning Jesus did not speak on the issue specifically of unbelieving spouses) If any brother has a wife who is not a believer and she is willing to live with him, he must not divorce her. (if she is willing)**

**\* Married to a pagan (only we are the pagans) they consider Christians a cult. Opposite of everything they know and live.**

**13 And if a woman has a husband who is not a believer and he is willing to live with her, she must not divorce him. (Women were expected to worship the gods of their husbands – is he willing to allow her to stay – not kick her out)**

**Why stay together? 14 For the unbelieving husband has been sanctified through his wife, and the unbelieving wife has been sanctified through her believing husband. Otherwise your children would be unclean, but as it is, they are holy. (Paul Is not saying they are saved by her being there)**

* **No, your life brings God’s presence into that house**

**The situation does not make the marriage impure - marriage is still holy**

**Tragically early Christians were guilty of leaving their spouses. One of the great heathen complaints against the early Christians was that Christianity broke up families. One of the first charges brought against Christians was "tampering with domestic relationships."**

**You make the home holy – set apart for a purpose in their life. You are holy – filled with the Holy Spirit. Wherever you are the Holy Spirit is manifesting himself through you. God can work in their life thru you.**

**What if they leave me? Some will - 1 Cor 7:15 But if the unbeliever leaves, let it be so. The brother or the sister is not bound (to the marriage) in such circumstances; God has called us to live in peace. (don’t be difficult / vengeful)**

**Biblical Divorce: 2 allowances (escape clauses)**

1. **Any sexual immorality (Matt 5:32, 19:5-9)**
2. **Abandonment / desertion (1 Cor 7:15)**

**Again, I want to clarify:**

**If you are in an abusive relationship – get out. And don’t; look back.**

**If you are in a abusive marriage – get out and seek help.**

**These are allowances not requirements - permitted not commanded. God has the power to heal any marriage.**

**If I have a spiritually mis-matched marriage should I get a divorce?**

**No - Stay together if you can - even if it’s rocky**

**Rather than asking “is \_\_\_\_\_ a ground for divorce,” ASK - “is \_\_\_ grounds for forgiveness, restoration, and/or counseling?”**

**A Few Big Ideas:**

* **There is nothing wrong, & everything right, about sex in marriage**

**The enemy Satan works hard to get you have sex before marriage and works hard are to get you to stop having it after marriage.**

**He works to encourage sex outside and to discourage sex within marriage – don’t buy the lies. Sex is beautiful in God’s design.**

**Married people you have an assignment… :)**

* **God hates divorce – because he loves you! (Malachi 2:16)**

**Even under the allowances, God hates it – because he loves you. It hurts you – he hates this for you.**

**God loves you more than an institution called marriage**

* **Divorce is not the unforgivable sin or even close**

**Used to subjugate & belittle people. You can’t lead, but a murderer can.**

**There is forgiveness and a new beginning, regardless of past.**

**Maybe you did it all wrong. There is not condemnation for those who are in Christ. God’s grace is powerful and able to heal, restore a heart, and renew a life.**

**2 Cor 5:17 - Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!**

* **Never sacrifice your marriage for ministry**

**Some in Corinth were willing to sacrifice their marriage to “pursue God” – this happens every day. A sad shame.**

**Head the words of Paul and Jesus! You have a gift next to you!**

* **Never give up on your spouse**

**God can use you even in a difficult marriage to introduce them to Jesus. Don’t lose hope that God can you use!**

**Paul ends this section with hope – 1 Cor 7:16 How do you know, wife, whether you will save your husband? Or, how do you know, husband, whether you will save your wife?**

**\*\*BTW - This about marriage only not dating.**

**Keep praying – keep trusting – keep being light in your home.**

**Next week – the challenges of being single in a married world.**