

December 6, 2020
I Corinthians 7:10-19
Biblical Rules For Married People

Verses 10–11. Paul’s direction to Christians married to one another was like that of Jesus Himself (Mark 10:2–12): as a rule, no divorce (cf. Matt. 5:32) When problems occurred in a Christian marriage, the resolution was to be sought in reconciliation (cf. Eph. 4:32), not in divorce. *Lowery, D. K.*

Verses 10–11, Paul now affirms a word about the subject of divorce. In the light of vv. 12–16, he is probably talking here about whether divorce is appropriate between two believers, since the next unit discusses the issue of mixed marriages. Here Paul feels he is on firm ground to give a “command,” since the command he is giving comes directly from Jesus (“the Lord”; see Mt 5:31–32; 19:8–9; Mk 10:5–9). The situation is the same for both spouses: Divorce is not an option—neither for the husband to divorce his wife nor for the wife to divorce her husband.

11 But Paul is also a realist and knows that divorce does indeed take place. The “if” clause he uses in v. 11 is a more hypothetical condition than the one in v. 9. If and when a divorce does take place and if there is no reconciliation, each partner in the marriage should remain single. Naturally this raises a lot of questions, especially with a divorce rate both in our society at large and in the church approaching 50 percent of marriages (multiple divorces for some). *Verbrugge, V. D.*

Verses 12–13, If a divorce is to take place, the initiation must come from the pagan spouse, not the Christian one (cf. v. 15). *Verbrugge, V. D.*

Verse 14, Regarding **verse 14** Paige Patterson wrote the following after presenting 3 views on this problematic verse, “The conclusion which must be drawn is greatly assisted by a close look at the word translated “sanctified” The sense in which this consecration is to be understood depends completely upon the context and the question being discussed. For example, believers are told to “sanctify the Lord God in your hearts” (I Peter 3:15). God has no need for sanctification. The obvious intent of the passage is that the Lord be set apart in a very special place in the heart of a believer as his object of devotion. Here is a case where the word “sanctify” has no salvific sense attached to it at all. Whereas in biblical Greek the word refers more often to soteriological matters, the fact is that it does not exclusively have this nuance. The best possible understanding of the passage, therefore, is that even the unbelieving partner in a marriage is set apart to receive the very special blessings of God that come through the union with the believing partner. That this cannot possibly mean the automatic salvation of the unbeliever is indicated by verse 16, where Paul suggested the possibility that the unbelieving partner might be led to salvation. In fact, that distinct possibility is one of the most profound blessings that will be involved as the unbelieving partner is set apart to the blessings of God. By the same token, the children born to such a union are not “unclean” Rather, they are “holy” once again, there is no thought that the children of such unions are automatically saved. The thought is, rather, that the children of that union are beneficiaries of the sanctified life of the believing partner and are visited by God with the special blessings commensurate with the blessings of God showered upon the believing partner in marriage.” *The Troubled Triumphant Church*, pp. 119-120

APPLICATION:

Problems in marriage are rarely discussed in the local church these days. This has led to lots of confusion about how to biblically broach marital problems. Paul, in our passage today, has instructed that believers should not pursue divorce. The goal should be reconciliation. If the marriage is mixed, that is one believer one lost person, the believer is not to pursue a divorce if the lost spouse is willing to stay with them.

In the case wherein the lost person wants to leave, they may do so and the believer is called to peace. In this case the now single believer is instructed not to remarry.

Divorce is a painful experience. No one goes into this covenant relationship wanting to have it end in this way. However, the divorce rate is high in the secular world as well as in evangelical circles. Divorce is not an unpardonable sin, but it is to be avoided if at all possible. If it is not avoidable Paul has laid out guidelines to be followed by Christians. The past is done, it cannot be rewritten for those who have experienced this tragedy.

What we can do as a body of believers from this day forward is commit to help others who are considering marriage to avoid pitfalls. The Lord has given us instructions on how to go about this wonderful thing called marriage.

Marriage is sacred and holy, "holy matrimony." God instituted it, and it is very good. A young man once told me that he promised his wife at the outset their marriage these words, "There is NOTHING that you can ever say, there is NOTHING that you can ever do, that will make me leave you." What a promise upon which to build a marriage commitment.