

# 1 Corinthians 7:1-7

## Paul Rejects Asceticism And Reinforces Marriage

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**The Two Main Approaches To 1 Cor 7:1-7**

**1. Paul is stating his own position:**  
1 Cor 7:1 Now concerning the things which you wrote, it is good for a man not to touch a woman.

**2. Paul is quoting the Corinthian letter:**  
1 Cor 7:1 Now concerning the things which you wrote: "It is good for a man not to touch a woman."

Problem with option 1:  
Paul certainly would not espouse an ascetic view: (Gen 2:18; Col 2:20-21; 1 Tim 4:13)

Strengths of option 2:  
Paul often quotes the Corinthian "slogans" (6:12-13; 8:1,4)  
This would be consistent with Paul's "anti-asceticism"

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### Gordon Fee's Reconstruction

"Since you yourself are unmarried, and are not actively seeking marriage, and since you have denied *porneia* in your letter to us, is it not so that one is better off not to have sexual intercourse at all? After all, in the new age which we have already entered by the Spirit, there is neither marrying nor giving in marriage. Why should we not 'be as the angels' now? Besides, since the body counts for nothing, if some wish to fulfill physical needs there are always the prostitutes" (Fee, NICNT, 276).

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### Paul Corrects Corinthian Asceticism

1 Cor 7:1-2 (Now concerning) the things about which you wrote, it is good for a man not to touch a woman. But because of immoralities, each man is to have his own wife, and each woman is to have her own husband.

Now Concerning = περι δε – used to mark a new section of thought, but one that is usually related to the overall context. (7:25; 8:1; 8:4; 12:1; 16:1; 16:12)

#### περι δε In Matthew 24

- A. When ...these things (24:3b)
- B. What...sign of coming (24:3b)
- B. Matthew 24:4-35 (answers what sign)
- A. Matthew 24:36-25:13 (answers when- these things)

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### Paul Corrects Corinthian Asceticism

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But – adversative: Paul is disagreeing with their slogan. Paul is not advocating asceticism and then adding a concession based on Corinthian immoralities.

Immoralities = "the immoralities" (τας πορνειας)

- Definite article + the plural = immoralities that have occurred, not ones that may occur.

Is to have (εχειτω) = euphemism for sexual relations (Exod. 2:1; Deut. 28:30; 2 Chr. 11:21 Luke 20:28; John 4:18 [twice]; 1 Cor 5:1; 7:29 ) λαμβανω = taken in marriage

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### Husbands And Wives "Own" One Another

1 Cor 7:3-4 The husband must fulfill his duty to his wife, and likewise also the wife to her husband. The wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does; and likewise also the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does.

- A. Husband should fulfill duty to wife vs.3a
- B. Wife has a duty to her husband vs.3b
- B. Wife doesn't own body- husband does vs.4a
- A. Husband doesn't own body – wife does vs.4b

1 Cor 7:4a NIV The wife's body does not belong to her alone but also to her husband.

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### What Is Paul's Concession?

1 Cor 7:5-6 Stop depriving one another, except by agreement for a time, so that you may devote yourselves to prayer, and come together again so that Satan will not tempt you because of your lack of self-control. But this I say by way of concession, not of command.

Stop depriving = pres/act/imp – indicates that they were doing these things. Deprived (αποστειρω) was used in 6:7-8 for the man who had defrauded his brother!

James 5:4 Behold, the pay of the laborers who mowed your fields, *and* which has been withheld by you, cries out *against you*...

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Paul allows abstinence in marriage only by agreement and “for a time.” (προς καιρος) – “for the appointed time” – proving it is not an unlimited time!

Come = ητε –pres/act/subj – Subjunctive with ινα clause often denotes purpose as well (so that).

So that = the final purpose clause explains why they should not “deprive one another”(Satan's temptation)

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**Traditional view:** This (concession) links all the way back to 7:1-2 Now concerning the things about which you wrote, it is good for a man not to touch a woman. But because of immoralities, each man is to have his own wife, and each woman is to have her own husband.

Problem: Verses 2,3, and 5 are imperatives – not concessions! Vs. 5 is the more natural antecedent.

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### Celibacy Is A Gift of God

1 Cor 7:7 Yet I wish that all men were even as I myself am. However, each man has his own gift from God, one in this manner, and another in that.

All men = ἀνθρώπους – meaning mankind (Gen. 1:27 versus Bethel and NWC)

Gift from God = χάρισμα - Paul was not saying he wished all people to be unmarried, but to have a gift as he did – so as not to fall into sexual immorality.

Implication: Celibacy – God's gift/ Marriage – God's gift

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### Application

Human beings, in their depravity, have the natural default position of engaging in ascetic practices in the fruitless attempt to justify and sanctify themselves. 1 Corinthians 7:1-7 records Paul's reply to Corinthians who attempted to become more "spiritual" through abstaining from the normal sexual union in marriage. Paul corrects them by reinforcing the privileges and duties of marriage, and by reminding them of their vulnerabilities to Satan's temptations.

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### Application

Col 2:20-23 If you have died with Christ to the elementary principles of the world, why, as if you were living in the world, do you submit yourself to decrees, such as, "Do not handle, do not taste, do not touch!" (which all *refer to* things destined to perish with use)—in accordance with the commandments and teachings of men? These are matters which have, to be sure, the appearance of wisdom in self-made religion and self-abasement and severe treatment of the body, *but are* of no value against fleshly indulgence.

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