

## THE SACRED ACT OF CHRISTIAN MARRIAGE

### STUDENT GUIDE

#### DAILY BIBLE READING

DAY 1	I CORINTHIANS 7: 1-16
DAY 2	I CORINTHIANS 7: 16-40
DAY 3	I CORINTHIANS 7: 1-16
DAY 4	I CORINTHIANS 7: 16-40
DAY 5	I CORINTHIANS 7: 1-40
DAY 6	I CORINTHIANS 7: 1-40
DAY 7	I CORINTHIANS 7: 1-40

*The witty newspaper columnist Erma Bombeck once wrote, "There are no guarantees in marriage. If that's what you're looking for, go live with a Sears battery." While Bombeck was unfortunately correct in her humorous conclusion concerning guarantees in marriage, the Scripture offers a much more positive outlook for successful relationships. Indeed the Apostle Paul devotes an entire chapter to the subject. A more colorful (and Biblically accurate) bit of advice is given by a third-grader name "Britney." Citizen, a Focus on the Family magazine, reported her advice for successful marriages: "My advice is to say you love each other for the rest of your lives. Don't get a divorce." The Apostle Paul agrees with Britney, not Bombeck!*

#### OUTLINE

- 1. The Monogamy of Christian Marriage (vv.1-2)** - When Paul wrote to the Corinthians, he undoubtedly was responding to a letter that had written to him (v.1). We often fail to remember this two-way dialogue taking place. In the letter, they inquired about certain difficulties they were experiencing. One such difficulty was the nature of marriage, singleness, and the imminent coming of our Lord. Paul's response included principles for the married and unmarried.

The first principle Paul explains is the principle of *oneness*. By oneness we mean monogamy — *one man for one woman*. Jesus instructed us that monogamy was God's original intention (Mt. 19:8). Two reasons are revealed which explain the necessity of monogamy.

A.) *The sanctity of the marriage relationship (v. 28)*. Since marriage is ordained by the Lord, marriage between a godly man and woman is surely not wrong — if the marriage is of the Lord.

B.) *The purity of the marriage relationship (v. 2)*. In order to "avoid fornication" Paul implores the Corinthians to consider the purity marriage secures. In other words, a very real basis for marriage is to avoid sin!

In addition, there are at least three other reasons Scripture gives for the purity of marriage — *Companionship (Gen. 2:18,20), Children (Gen. 1:28), and Control (v. 2)*

**Question:** If marriage is designed to be monogamous, why did God allow Abraham, David, Solomon, and a host of others to practice polygamy? Explain.

*(Continued on back)*

**2. The Harmony of Christian Marriage (vv.3-16)** - Not only by oneness do we refer to monogamy - *one man for one woman* - but oneness also implies *harmony*. Marriage is a partnership; and a partnership is meant to be a duet not a duel! How is harmony worked out in the marriage relationship?

A.) *Physical Harmony (vv. 3-5)* — Paul speaks of physical harmony in terms of “due benevolence.” The term translated “due” is the Greek term which means “to owe.” It was primarily used in the first century, for example, of money that was owed to a lender. Furthermore, “benevolence” comes from another Greek word that means “goodwill.” Paul insisted marital vows place a man and woman in a position where they belong to one another, obligating them as debtors to each other. Both husband and wife are entitled to loving affection from their spouse.

B.) *Psychological Harmony (vv. 10-11)* — The key term here is “reconciled” properly denoting “to change, exchange” something. Hence, Paul is suggesting wife and husband to change from enmity to friendship. Or, in other words, to “reconcile.”

C.) *Spiritual Harmony (vv. 12-16)* — The Bible presents an unequivocal principle concerning spiritually mixed marriages — *Christians must marry Christians* (cp. v. 39). Marriage is the most intimate relationship in the world. How could a Christian share it with a non-Christian? What spiritual edification could result from a believer marrying an unbeliever?

**Question:** Do you connect deeply with your spouse beyond the physical and even psychological dimensions in your relationship? Why or why not? What could you do to improve the spiritual harmony in connecting with your spouse? Take care to share in these areas with heightened sensitivity.

**3. The Permanency of Christian Marriage (vv. 16-40)** - Paul gets to the third principle of marriage, which is *permanency*. The phrase so often found in marital vows which says, “till death do us part”, reflects perfectly the Biblical record concerning marriage. Marriage is a lifetime contract.

One man for one woman for life is a Judeo-Christian principle written into the constitutional framework of our free society. It is the basis of our social construct for family. Little hope remains for our society if it accommodates a secular culture’s push for a redefinition of marriage.

In addition, Paul makes it clear Christians are only to marry “in the Lord” (v. 39). One asks for a lifetime of wreckage and difficulty when someone who isn’t living in submission to the King of Kings is wed to one who is.

**Question:** Do you think Christians take seriously the principle of marital permanency? Explain. Does your church have marriage enrichment ministries to promote healthy Christian marriages?

**Wrap Up:** Shocking statistics demonstrate the odd fact that Christian marriages fail at approximately the same rate as non-Christian marriages do. How can this be true? Believers have the Holy Spirit to empower them and the Word of God to guide them. Hence, their marriages should surely outshine the world’s marriages. Monogamous marriages — Christian marriages — are built on harmony that touches the couple physically, psychologically, and spiritually. Indeed the only way for marital permanency to remain a reality is for Biblical harmony to drive the marriage relationship.