The Principles of Marriage

(0:04) Good afternoon, church. Anointed worship. The presence of God is here, and of course, we end our worship service, we have communion every Sunday, and to me, you know, I just ask God to give me a thankfulness for what He's done.

(0:24) I don't deserve the cross. I'm not worthy of it, but He loved us anyway. He loved me anyway.

Went to the cross, knowing all the filthy thoughts I would think, all the violent thoughts I would think, all the times that I would fail to trust Him, and He did it anyway. (0:44) And He did it because of love, you know, it's the kind of love that a man would have for his bride, and in fact, one of the pictures we see is of Christ in a church's husband and wife. (0:57) And that's a good segue for our lesson today.

We're going to be in 1 Corinthians 7, and it's going to talk about the principles of marriage. (1:08) And this comes with a trigger warning. As I've said before, 1 Corinthians is arguably the most controversial book in the New Testament in terms of modern theological debates.

(1:22) I'm going to wade into territory in which there's differing views, and people debate those views, and sometimes they debate them in a very hardcore way. Sometimes people are even

hostile. (1:35) I've seen on these debates where some people will say, you know, this isn't a house debate.

If you disagree with me, you're a heretic. You don't belong to Him. You're an apostasy if you don't agree with me.
(1:47) So I'm just putting out a trigger warning here, and what I'm about to say isn't going to neatly fit into any doctrinal school. (1:58) So I'm putting out the trigger warning. My job is to be faithful to the Scripture, to exegete the Scripture, to show you what the Scripture is saying, what the text is saying, and then we go from there to see how that applies to us today.

(2:12) So I've given the trigger warning. So when we break it down here, we're going to talk about in the first nine verses of 1 Corinthians 7, the purpose of marriage. (2:25) We're going to see in verses 10-11 biblical mandates for divorce and remarriage.

(2:31) And then we're also going to see that there's biblical concessions for divorce and remarriage. (2:37) And I'll go into that here, and this is where what I say may debate from some of the things you may have been taught. (2:47) And then there's going to be a warning against excessively worldly desire to change.

(2:52) And the warning is there because I think much of this space is driven by worldly desire. (2:58) People are tempted to make the text fit what they want, you know. (3:03) In fact, the Anglian church was birthed that way.

Of course, it was ultimately the providence of God, but on the part of people, it was a very carnal, sinful thing. (3:15) King Henry

VIII wanted to remarry. The Roman Catholic Church said, no, you can't.

(3:20) So they anathematized each other. King Henry VIII declares himself king of the Church of England. (3:27) The Church of England splits off from the Catholic Church.

(3:30) And so the Church of England was born out of carnal lust. (3:38) And that was ultimately God's providence because that did set the stage for the Baptists to say, no, no earthly leaders head of the church. (3:46) Christ is head of the church.
And so the Baptist churches got to be born. (3:49) You had General Baptists and then out of that, particular Baptists. (3:54) And they disagreed over whether the atonement applied to everyone or whether it applied only to the elect.

(4:00) But that began a road towards a, in my view, more Christ-centered way of doing church. (4:07) It at least provided that opportunity where you were looking to Christ rather than some pope or some bishop as the arbiter of the Bible. (4:15) It paved the way for our religious freedom because it rejected the idea that some earthly king or some earthly potentate was the head of the church.

(4:24) The church belongs to Christ. It doesn't belong to a bishop. It doesn't belong to a pope.

It doesn't belong to the king. (4:32) There is a sacred space in the church that's not for the king to legislate. (4:38) And so this was birthed in all that.

And at the end of the chapter, we're going to talk about the virtue of chastity and the challenge of marriage. (4:47) And in the first century context, the debate wasn't over whether to marry or fulfill lust in some quarters. (4:57) There was a movement that said that when you become a Christian that you should just abstain from sex.

(5:02) That sex is no longer a part of your life. Sex is evil. And much of this was rooted in Gnosticism.

(5:10) And they were saying that all sex is evil. And there was sex that when people were initiated, they stopped having sex. (5:17) They would divorce their wives so that they could be chaste.

And that missed God's picture. (5:24) And so Paul deals with that. How to navigate that in a way that avoided it.

(5:29) And the church came to the conclusion that the Gnostics were wrong, but they tended to err more that way than towards what the modern church does in allowing worldly desires to flourish. (5:42) And so the first century context and the modern context are on those issues on opposite ends. (5:49) And so we're going to get into that.

But let us, before we dive into all the controversial stuff, find out what the purpose of marriage is. (5:59) And we're going to start in the first verse of 1 Corinthians 7, 1-40. (6:04) Now concerning the things of which you wrote me, it is good for a man not to touch a woman.

(6:10) Nevertheless, because of sexual immorality, let each man have his own wife, let each woman have her own husband. (6:17)

Let the husband render to his wife the affection due her, and likewise the wife also to the husband. (6:22) So what Paul is saying is for those who choose to be single, for those who just say, I don't want anything to do with sex, I'm going to be single, I'm going to be celibate, I'm just going to focus on the Lord, that's good.

(6:37) And even under the Hebrew law, there was a place where women would dedicate themselves that way and they would not have sexual relations. (6:46) And so we see an ideal put forth, but then the ideal is then tethered to the practical. (6:52) Because for most people that's not practical.

God created us to get married, to have children. (6:59) He created us sexual beings. He didn't create us like the angels.

(7:03) The angels didn't have a sexual nature by nature, but God gave man a sexual nature. (7:09) And for most of us, we're going to want to get married, and so the Bible then says this is the structure in which you're going to express those desires. (7:19) You're to have one wife, one man is to have one woman, that woman is to have a husband.

(7:25) And that aspect of life is to be expressed within that structure, it is prohibited outside of that structure. (7:32) And so man and woman get married, and then with the marriage there's a duty. (7:37) The husband is to render to his wife the affection to her, likewise the wife to her husband.

(7:43) So there's a duty to try to satisfy that other person in marriage. (7:48) And so he's setting up this structure for the

majority of us who are going to get married. (7:54) I've been married more of my life than single.

(7:57) I'm almost 60 years old, and I've been married longer than I've been single. (8:02) And that's including my childhood. (8:05) My first marriage was around 14 years.

(8:09) That ended in divorce because my ex-wife committed adultery. (8:15) And then I'm currently married for 16 years to Ann. (8:20) So I've been married longer than single, and that's the normal course for most people.

(8:25) Not everyone is called to be celibate, but for those who are, and of course we're going to find out later, Paul felt that that was his calling. (8:35) And there's an interesting story behind that. (8:40) Some scholars believe that when Paul had his Damascus Road experience, he converted to Christ.

(8:48) But that he was actually married, and his wife refused to convert, and they ended up getting a divorce because of the faith. (8:56) And that Paul then subsequently decided that he needed to stay single. (9:01) That's what some scholars believe.

We don't really see a clear explanation in the text, but that's what some scholars, some of them have put forward. (9:10) But Paul is saying, you know, for most of us, marriage is the way to go. (9:15) But if you choose not to be married, that's good.

(9:18) And so he continues on in exposing the purpose of marriage. (9:21) In verse 4 and 5, he talks about what's sometimes called the conjugal duty. (9:32) That is the duty of married people to do what married people do.

(9:37) And this is the stuff that children are made of. (9:40) This is how we have children, this is how we have families, and this is an important part in a happy marriage. (9:47) An importance that far outweighs the actual time spent in those activities.

(9:53) He says, the wife does not have authority over her body, but the husband does. (10:00) Some would say, Dallas, you're sounding like a pastor, you're sounding like you're into the patriarchy, but there's a twist here. (10:07) Likewise, the husband does not have authority over his body, but the wife does.
(10:10) So there are areas where the wife has authority over the husband. (10:13) When it comes to the conjugal duty of marriage, the husband has a duty to the wife. (10:21) It says, do not deprive one another except with consent for a time that you need.

(10:25) Give yourselves to fasting and prayer, and come together again so Satan does not tempt you because of your lack of self-control. (10:32) And so, I just want to make a comment here. (10:35) There are some people that, due to medical conditions, that they struggle in that area.

(10:41) He's not condemning people that medically can't, but what he's doing is he's issuing a corrective to those who would simply refuse. (10:51) And they would just say, I don't want to do it, I'm not doing it, for whatever reasons. (10:56) In certain feminist circles, that's common for them to tell women to deny their husbands.

(11:02) And sometimes that denial happens because there's a problem in the marriage. (11:07) Someone is cheating on somebody, and so there's a problem there. (11:11) So he's not

addressing people who have medical problems, but he's addressing people who, through willful sin, fail to fulfill their conjugal and marital duty.

(11:21) And so Paul's saying, if you're going to do it through mutual consent, you can stop for a time of consecration, fasting, and prayer, (11:29) but come together as soon as that's done so Satan doesn't tempt you for your lack of self-control. (11:34) What is that temptation? I think we all know what it is. (11:37) If you're in a marriage and you're not happy in a marriage, that becomes the occasion of people who cheat.

(11:44) I have an uncle, and he was married to his wife, and she would be known to just capriciously deny. (11:52) We don't know why she did it, but it was a weapon to her. (11:56) If he didn't do something exactly her way, she would say, no, you're not doing it. (11:59) Well, one day he goes out on her, he has sex with someone else, and when the affair was blown up, nobody blamed him. (12:09) They all blamed her, because it was well known that she weaponized sex as a method of control. (12:17) So he finally went out.

They end up getting divorced. (12:19) He marries that woman that he was having the affair with, and that woman becomes his wife for the rest of his days. (12:28) All of them are deceased now, but I'm just saying that to make the point, if you don't come together regularly, that opens the door for Satan.

(12:39) And so Paul's saying, don't do this. (12:42) God created marriage to be mutually satisfying. He created marriage for children, so don't give Satan a stronghold here.

(12:48) So he's given some rules for how he should behave within marriage. (12:54) Continuing on here in verse 6, but I say this is a concession, not as a commandment. (13:00) And so now he's going to kind of pivot between marriage and chastity.

(13:04) He's saying it's not a commandment because he's not commanding people to be married. (13:09) Some would argue that because he says it's a concession that you can get married and then just change the rules willy-nilly. (13:17) That's not what that means.

The concession is you don't have to be married, but if you are married, then there are certain rules for how to conduct yourself. (13:25) I bring this up because I had somebody one time that argued that there was no sexual duty because it was a concession. (13:32) Well, she didn't get it.

The concession wasn't that, oh, I can take these commands and I can pick and choose. (13:39) And when I want to, I'll follow the commandment, I'll invoke it. When I don't, I don't.

(13:44) The concession is you don't have to be married, but if you choose to be married, if you partake in the marriage, if you come under the covenant of holy matrimony, there are rules. (13:54) There is a structure to be followed in that relationship. (13:57) But the concession is that you don't have to be married.

(14:00) And in verse 7, he says, I wish that all men were even as I myself. (14:05) But each one has his own gift from God, one in this manner and another in that manner. (14:12) What is Paul referring to? He's referring to the fact that he's single.

(14:16) Paul is unmarried. He's an unmarried person here giving advice about marriage and singleness to a mixed crowd of which some are married, some are not married. (14:28) But I say to the unmarried and to the widows, it is good for them if they remain even as I am.

(14:34) But if they cannot exercise self-control, let them marry, for it is better to marry than to burn with passion. (14:42) I think that's self-explanatory there. (14:48) God created marriage.

Marriage is good. (14:51) And what Paul is saying, if you can't control yourself, if you think you're going to go out and live a life of fornication, go ahead and get married. (14:59) Most of us are going to be married at some point in time.

(15:02) Very few of us are equipped to be celibate. (15:05) And if we try to be celibate, or if we force celibacy, then it creates all sorts of problems. (15:12) That's at least part of the reason why there's such a huge problem in the Catholic Church.

(15:17) They require their priests to be celibate, and they have a huge problem with sexual sin. (15:23) They have a huge problem with child-molesting priests. (15:27) There was a book called The Priest, The Woman, The Confessional.

(15:31) And the guy that wrote it did some kind of polling and found out that 90% of the priests had at least one sexual affair with a woman that was in the confessional. (15:43) And the confessional provided an ideal place because you were going there and you were supposed to confess everything. (15:49) So you have these women going in and they were confessing their sexual sins to the priest.

(15:54) And of course the priest would be a man, and that was a formula for disaster. (15:59) And it was a man who couldn't have sex because the church said you can't do it. (16:05) And it resulted in disaster.

(16:08) So Paul's saying, go ahead and get married. (16:12) If you're not equipped to be celibate, go ahead and get married. (16:17) And I'm not going to say that that would have stopped all of it.

(16:20) But I'm sure there's a lot of the cases that might have. (16:23) If the priest was a happily married pastor, and of course I would argue that a woman shouldn't be alone with a man confessing those kinds of things. (16:34) That's an area where I disagree with how the Catholic church has that set up.

(16:39) I would not do that. If I were counseling a woman, Ann would be with me. (16:45) And especially if she was needing to talk about those kinds of things.

(16:48) There are certain accountabilities that you do. (16:52) I observe what you could call the Billy Graham rule. (16:56) And it was one he came up with.

(16:58) He refused to be alone with a woman that was not his mother or his wife. (17:03) In fact, he was so strict on it, he would not even take a picture with a woman that was not his mother, wife, or sister, or immediate family. (17:13) And I don't know that you have to get to the point of not taking any pictures.

(17:16) But there's certainly some guidelines as far as being alone. (17:21) You don't go and be alone with someone that's not your wife. (17:24) Someone you might be attracted to.

(17:26) Somebody in whom that conversation could result in one thing leading to another. (17:31) And then before you know it, you'd sin. (17:33) Because you had a moment of lack of self-control.

(17:37) And of course, Paul and his whole discussion here is ultimately appealing to Genesis. (17:46) And talking about the purpose of marriage. (17:48) And in Genesis 2 to 24, we find out why God ordained marriage here.

(17:57) And verse 20 reads, (18:07) So the Lord caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam. (18:12) And he slept and he took one of his ribs and closed up the flesh in his place. (18:17) Then the rib which the Lord God had taken from Adam, he made into a woman and he brought her to the man.

(18:23) And Adam said, (18:24) This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh. (18:27) She shall be called woman because she was taken out of man. (18:31) So when we talk about that sex is just between one man and one woman.

(18:37) That marriage is one man and one woman. (18:39) You don't have one man and many women. (18:41) You don't have many women and one man.

(18:43) You don't have group marriages. (18:45) You don't have same-sex marriage. (18:47) It's not because we want to be arbitrary.

(18:50) It's not because we want to discriminate or be bigots. (18:52) It's rooted in the natural order of things. (18:56) It's rooted in God's created order.
(18:59) And this is how God created. (19:01) He created one man and one woman. (19:04) And so that way that was his design for marriage.

(19:08) And we see that right here in Genesis. (19:11) Continuing in verse 24 here. (19:13) It says, (19:23) Masculine and feminine are the complementary expressions of the image of God.

(19:29) So there's one flesh and there's complementary male and female. (19:33) This is why same-sex marriage does not exist. (19:37) Now you may say, Pastor, of course it exists.

(19:40) It's legal in all 50 states. (19:41) Have you not read Obergefell's decision? (19:44) Yes, I've actually read that decision. (19:50) And of course if marriage is just a legal construct, (19:55) if it's just some construct that man makes up, (19:58) then you might talk about same-sex marriage.

(20:01) But it is not just a construct. (20:04) Marriage is rooted in the natural order. (20:07) You cannot, Adam and Steve cannot mimic Adam and Eve.

(20:11) Even if they want to. (20:14) And I don't have to go into whether they're sincere or not. (20:18) They're not able to because that kind of relationship is not possible.

(20:23) There's a complementarity between male and female. (20:27) And it's rooted in the natural order. (20:29) And it goes deeper in sex.

(20:30) Every time you plug that light in, there's a complementarity between the proton and the electron. (20:37) And if the electron decides to identify as a proton, the lights are coming out. (20:44) I'm glad the natural order doesn't rebel, but people do.

(20:48) And so we're seeing here a marriage, a union of complementarities. (20:54) And it becomes one flesh. (20:56) Which raises an issue.
(20:57) When you divorce, you're literally taking one flesh and you're ripping it apart. (21:03) So divorce is like God taking a human being and just ripping them in half. (21:11) That sounds like it's going to hurt.

(21:13) And yes, it hurts. (21:14) Divorce hurts. (21:16) And that hurt of divorce is why there's some very strict rules around divorce and remarriage.

(21:23) That's why we can't have the liberal thing that says if the husband and the wife are not happy with each other, just let them get divorced. (21:34) Let them go and pursue something else. (21:36) That doesn't really work because there's hurt when a divorce happens.

(21:41) Sometimes a divorce may be necessary. (21:44) Sometimes it may be justified. (21:46) But there's never such a thing as a good divorce.

(21:49) There's damage that ensues from the divorce. (21:51) Because you're taking one flesh and you're ripping it apart. (21:54) There's no way to rip apart a body without damaging that body.

(21:59) And so in verse 10 he then goes and starts talking about the biblical mandates. (22:05) Now to the married I command, yet not I but the Lord, a wife is not to depart from her husband. (22:11) But even if she does depart, let her remain unmarried or be reconciled to her husband.

(22:16) And the husband is not to divorce his wife. (22:18) So he's saying here, don't divorce. (22:24) But if she does, let her remain unmarried.

(22:28) Don't go on a serial divorce and remarriage, divorce and remarriage. (22:33) And I'm speaking as a noble woman that's been married eight times. (22:37) She gets married faster than some people change their clothes.
(22:42) And each time she gets more and more damaged, more and more damaged. (22:46) So we're seeing a biblical mandate here. (22:49) And Jesus also talked about this mandate.

(22:52) In Matthew it says, (23:05) So Jesus is appealing to Genesis now. (23:11) Verse 19, 5. (23:24) So there's a fundamental reality here that's damaged when you divorce. (23:29) So we can't really allow divorce.

We need to discourage divorce. (23:36) They said, (23:37) And so Jesus is now giving us a brief glimpse of what we're going to talk about in a few minutes. (23:48) Because we're going to talk about concessions that existed in Scripture.

(23:53) And Jesus is explaining here why those concessions existed. (23:57) He said, (24:05) So Jesus is laying out a principle here. (24:08) A principle here is when you get married, you become one flesh.

(24:12) It's this inviolable thing. (24:15) And when it is ripped apart, there is a huge consequence. (24:18) So the principle is one man, one woman for a life.

(24:22) But Jesus is saying, (24:28) And of course, when you go into the law of Moses here, (24:32) Moses didn't willy-nilly do it. (24:33) But God instructed Moses on the rules of marriage and remarriage. (24:37) And those rules were more liberal here than what Jesus is laying out.

(24:42) The reason is that God's grace is available. (24:47) God knows that life happens. (24:49) And we're going to, in a few minutes, discuss some of these hard cases that resulted in this. (24:55) But I'm just giving you the brief preview. (24:58) The Scripture makes room for certain concessions. (25:02) But right now, Jesus said, (25:14) So we see here that there is one ground for divorce.

(25:20) That even in the strictest interpretation, it expunges you clean. (25:24) If somebody commits adultery,...

(0:00) They have ripped the marriage apart, and that person that has been victimized thus is free to (0:06) divorce, free to remarry, but if that exception isn't in play, and you get divorced, anyone who (0:14) marries that divorced person is committing adultery

by virtue of marrying them. So this is the biblical (0:22) principle. This is a strict interpretation.

This is done to protect the one flesh union. (0:27) Now in a few minutes I will talk about concessions. The concessions don't erase this hard fact.

(0:35) They don't erase it, but concessions exist because we live in the fallen world. God makes his grace (0:42) available, but Jesus here has given them the hard fact, and the reason was is that the bills of (0:49) divorcement were being misused. There were men who were divorcing their wives, writing out the (0:55) bill of divorcement because there was someone else waiting in the wings, (1:00) and they may have already had their affair, or they may not have had their affair, (1:05) but we see that even today.

High-profile couples getting divorced, and then within weeks (1:12) they're already in a new relationship. Jesus is saying, no, if you're doing that, (1:23) you're committing adultery. So he has some very strict biblical mandates here.

(1:30) Now let's talk about concessions. Just so you don't get confused here, (1:36) there are strict biblical principles, but God allows concessions (1:42) as grace, and to give you an example of why you might need one, let's say you have a woman. She's (1:50) married to her husband.

He beats her every day. He threatens to kill her, and it's escalating, (1:55) and it's a kind of relationship that if she stays in that marriage, she's going to end up dead, (2:04) and this comes up in discussions I have with other pastors. Do you tell them to

go ahead and (2:10) get divorced, or do you tell her that she's obligated to stay in the marriage because he (2:15) hasn't actually committed adultery, and this is where a lot of our debates ensue in, and so in (2:22) verse 12 here, Paul's going to get some nuances.
He's going to give some additional descriptions (2:30) here. He says, but to the rest I not the Lord say. So Paul is saying something on his own (2:36) authority here.

He says, if any brother has a wife who does not believe, and she is willing (2:40) to live with him, let him not divorce her, and a woman has a husband who does not believe, (2:45) if he is willing to live with her, let her not divorce him. For the unbelieving husband is (2:51) sanctified by the wife. The unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband.

Otherwise, your children (2:57) would be unclean, but now they are holy, but if the unbeliever departs, let him depart. A brother or (3:03) sister is not under bondage in such cases, but God has called us to peace. Now there are some that (3:09) would simply argue categorically that abandonment is a cause for divorce, and would add that as a (3:16) second to adultery.

There's a little nuance to that. If someone is in a situation of abandonment, (3:30) Paul is saying God has called us to peace, and this whole discussion on abandonment (3:34) is where Paul is saying, this is what I'm saying, not the Lord. So Paul is here, by his own (3:41) admission, giving a concession.

Now we should not understand that as just his opinion here, but let's (3:48) continue on and then I'll explain here. For how do you know a wife, whether you save your husband, (3:53) or how do

you know a husband, whether you'll save your wife? But to the rest, I, not the Lord, (4:02) so I want to kind of, I've read the passage, given a few comments here, but I want to kind of unpack (4:08) what's happening here, because Paul's saying that he is issuing it, not the Lord. This does not mean (4:15) that that's a mere opinion or suggestion, as some people might say.

Paul isn't just giving an opinion (4:23) here, he's not just giving a suggestion here. It doesn't mean that this isn't scripture. It's not a (4:30) free-for-all.
It means Paul is using apostolic authority rather than appealing to biblical norms (4:40) here, and that would be because the biblical norm is adultery is the only grounds, but he's now (4:46) talking about abandonment. Now what's going on here? You have some cases where somebody came to (4:55) the faith, and this was a common situation with the Corinthians. One person comes to the faith, (4:59) the other just leaves them, up and leaves them.

Other cases that were happening, they might not (5:04) physically leave, but it would get real hostile real quick. You know, it would be naive to think (5:12) that our modern days, the only day where men were killing, literally killing their wives with their (5:16) fists, beating them pillar to post, escalating, losing control, and then one day the wife is dead (5:23) because the husband lost control. So you had these various hard cases going on, and so (5:31) Paul is using apostolic authority.

It's a concession, adhering as much to biblical norms (5:37) while adopting the hard conditions of the law. It would be very difficult for me to tell a woman who (5:45) was literally in danger of her life to go back to a marriage where the husband was beating her,

(5:51) and it's fairly obvious that in any real sense there's no marriage there. A man doesn't beat his (5:58) wife to death.

A man should cherish his wife, not beat her to death. She's his wife. She's (6:05) the queen by a side.

She's not the doormat. She's not a boxing. I forget what they call those things, (6:13) those things, those boxes.

She's not a punching bag like he's a boxer. She's not Mike Tyson's (6:18) sparring partner. She's to be cherished as the weaker vessel, and there's overt abandonment (6:28) where the husband says I'm leaving you.

There's covert abandonment whereby his actions he shows (6:34) he has no regard for the marriage, and so Paul was issuing this as a way out, as a way of saying (6:40) if this is your situation, grace is going to apply to you. God's called us to peace. (6:46) God isn't requiring you to go back to be a punching bag.

He's not calling you to go back (6:51) to be a human sacrifice, and Paul's not the only one that gave concessions. Both Paul and Moses (7:00) gave concessions that deviated from the hard standard. Moses gave very liberal concessions.

(7:08) All a man had to do is write your divorce on a piece of paper. He handed the piece of paper out, (7:14) and what that piece of paper did was, if that woman was found with another man, (7:18) she could show them that, and show the elders that meant she was not stoned for adultery. (7:24) Without that, she would be stoned as an adulteress.

It doesn't mean that in the definition of marriage (7:32) that it isn't adultery. In the pure biblical definition, but that paper meant she would not (7:39) be prosecuted as an adulteress. She would be accepted in the community.

She would still have (7:44) good standing in the community. She would still be able to enter the tabernacle. She would still (7:50) be able to press in.

She wasn't being kicked out of the family of God. Without that, she was stoned (7:57) as an adulteress. She was considered apostate.

She was considered in rebellion against God, (8:03) and so that Bill of Divorcement was a grace given to women that were in a hard situation. (8:08) Now, Paul gives very conservative concessions here, and the reason should be obvious, because people (8:16) were abusing the Bills of Divorcement. There were men that were just handing them out like candy.

(8:22) They would get tired of their wife, give her a Bill of Divorcement, bring the girlfriend in, (8:27) and quote, marry her, and when they get tired of her, he'd give her, and they would go through (8:32) wives like candy, and on paper it looked good, but it revealed the heart of adultery. It was the (8:39) heart of a fornicator. It was the heart of a whoremonger, and so Paul says we're not doing that.

(8:46) We're not doing that. These are going to be very conservative concessions here, only on abandonment, (8:56) and this was not to be just willy-nilly individual decide, but by the church to deal with hard cases. (9:05) Now, in the case of my

divorce, I believe I had grounds under abandonment long before I found out (9:11) about the adultery, but I stayed in a bad marriage, because I wasn't for sure if I was right with God, (9:18) and then one day it was revealed, and it wasn't just one man.

My ex-wife was a serial adulteress, (9:31) and by the time the count was done, maybe up to 100 men, she was out there on the town, (9:39) and when that got revealed to me, then I felt I had the peace. I had the grounds for divorce. (9:45) I divorced her.

Later I remarried. I am still in that marriage. I am happily married to Ann Carter, (9:53) and I'm glad that God brought her to me, and so I didn't use abandonment, but there are hard cases.

(10:03) There are cases where women are literally being beat to death. There are cases where (10:10) women are being neglected to death, starved to death, and it's even worse in some of the third world countries, (10:17) things that are happening. There's extreme cruelty, so there are hard cases here where Paul is saying here, (10:26) even though this might not pass the strict test, God's called us to peace, and so the reason he's saying, (10:33) I, it's the same reason Moses said you could do the Bill of Divorcement.

We're not going to make (10:40) you go back to that guy who's going to kill you. You're still going to be regarded as saved. You're (10:45) still a full citizen of the community.

You still have freedom. Now I wish we lived in a world where (10:55) we didn't have hard cases, and this will be a trigger to some people because some people are (11:00) going to say,

Pastor Dallas, but Jesus said except for sexual immorality. Yeah, he did.

Paul's acknowledging it because (11:09) earlier he went into those biblical parameters here, very strict parameters, because God loves marriage, (11:17) and he hates divorce because divorce is always painful, so there's strict rules, but just as any (11:25) good legal system has caveats and nuances, Paul was issuing some nuances here to deal with hard cases, (11:32) and those nuances exist because we live in a fallen world, and those nuances exist so that (11:40) women don't face impossible choices. Children don't face impossible choices. (11:46) You know, if a woman's married to a husband and he's beating on the kids, (11:52) that could be another example here of a hard case where you might take a second look, (11:58) and so Paul was saying peace is in order here.

Grace is in order here, and he gives grace, (12:12) and Jesus hinted at these concessions that Paul spells out here, and this is in the 10th (12:20) verse of Matthew 19. This was after Jesus laid the hard line here. His disciples said if such is the (12:28) case of a man with his wife, it's better not to marry, but he said in verse 11, and he's (12:36) referring to Jesus here, all cannot accept the same, but only to those whom it has been given.

(12:42) There are eunuchs that were born thus from their mother's womb. There are eunuchs who were made (12:47) eunuchs by men. There are eunuchs who have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's (12:51) sake.

He who is able to accept it, let him accept it. Have I triggered everyone yet? (13:02) And do not be, you know, and of course,

these concessions aren't designed (13:10) to make it easy to indulge your carnal desires. In fact, we're given a mandate not to be conformed (13:17) to the world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is the good (13:21) and acceptable and perfect will of God.

So Paul here's showing nuances. Why would there be a (13:27) distinction between good, acceptable, and perfect? It's that we live in a fallen world, and in a (13:33) fallen world, we can describe the perfect will of God. If this was a perfect world, this is what (13:38) always be.

But there's also the acceptable and perfect will. And so the Bible gives us the (13:47) standard, but it also gives us a way to navigate the hard cases. It gives us a path forward for (13:53) grace to people who are in the hard cases, people who need grace.
And so you don't have a cookie (14:03) cutter size. You have the standard, folks. And the standard is that God hates divorce.

(14:10) You should only divorce on adultery. But God provides grace for those hard situations. (14:17) If you and your children are in danger, don't keep them in danger.

Because of the letter of the law, (14:23) get them out of danger. And if you're listening to this and your husband's beating on you, or maybe (14:29) it's a man being beaten on by a woman, call the police. If you or your children are being (14:37) threatened of lying for a limb, call the police.

Get the police involved. That person belongs in jail. (14:50) Those concessions were given so that people in those situations would

have a way out, that they (14:56) weren't in bondage to those kinds of situations.

It was not meant to loosen the rule. It was meant (15:05) to be observed in a way that honored the spirit of the law, but also give grace to those hard (15:12) situations. Concessions should always point back to the biblical norm, not to accommodation.

(15:19) Never accommodation and always in community and always doing strict adherence causes more harm. (15:26) That's the rule here. If strict adherence doesn't cause more harm, you should strictly adhere to the (15:32) rules.

But Paul recognized there were some cases where strict adherence to the letter of the law (15:38) would cause more harm. And hence the concessions existed. But they should always point to the (15:46) biblical norm.

We should always lift high the biblical norm of marriage. We should always lift (15:51) high the sacrament of marriage. We should always see divorce as an evil.

There's never a good (15:58) divorce. Sometimes there are necessary divorces though. And of course as we're going into the last (16:07) part of the chapter here, we're seeing warnings against excessive worldly desire to change.

(16:14) And Paul puts this here because it's so easy once you start talking about nuances and concessions (16:20) to simply interpret that to do whatever you want it to do. And that's not the purpose here. And this (16:27) is what he says in 17.

But as God has distributed each one as the Lord has called each one, (16:33) so let him walk. And so I ordain in all the churches. Was anyone called while circumcised? (16:43) Let him not become uncircumcised.

Was anyone called by while circumcised? Let him not be (16:48) circumcised. Circumcision is nothing and uncircumcision is nothing. But keeping the commandments of God is (16:55) what matters.

Let each one remain in the same colony in which he was called. Were you called (17:00) while a slave? Do not be concerned about it, but if you can make free, rather use it. For he who's (17:07) called the Lord while a slave is the Lord's freedman.

Likewise he who is called while free is Christ's (17:13) You were bought with a price. Do not become the slaves of men. Rather let each one remain in God (17:20) as the state in which he was called.

So in other words we shouldn't be driven by envy, by worldly (17:25) desire. And of course that applies to marriage and divorce. There are so many people who get (17:32) divorced because of the lust of their flesh.

And Paul's saying that should have nothing to do with it. (17:40) Let each person remain in the state in which he was called. (17:45) And then as we wrap up the chapter here, he's going to talk about conversions here.

(17:52) Now concerning virgins, I have no commandment for the Lord, yet I give judges one whom the Lord in (17:57) his mercy

has made trustworthy. I suppose therefore that this is good because of the present distress (18:03) that is good for a man to remain as he is. Are you bound to a wife? Do not seek to be loosed.

(18:12) Are you loosed from a wife? Do not seek a wife. But even if you do marry, you have not sinned. And if a (18:19) virgin marries, she has not sinned.

Nevertheless such will have trouble in this flesh, but I would (18:25) spare you. But this I say, brothers, the time is short that from now on even those who have wives (18:33) they had none. Those who weep as those who did not weep.

Those who rejoiced as those who did not (18:39) rejoice. Those who buy as though they did not possess. And those who use this world as not (18:46) misusing it.

For the form of this world is passing away. But I want you to be without care. He who (18:52) is unmarried cares for the things of the Lord, how he may please the Lord.

But he who is married (18:57) cares about the things of the world, how he may please his wife. There is a difference between a (19:03) wife and a virgin. The unmarried woman cares about the things of the Lord, that she may be holy both (19:08) in body and spirit.

But he who is married cares about the things of the world, how she may please (19:14) her husband. So you see what's happening. Paul is saying don't let worldly desire drive you.

(19:26) Get to a point where it doesn't drive you. It's not a sin to be married, but (19:31) he wants us to see there's challenges that happen when you are married. (19:37) Your focus is potentially divided, especially if that spouse isn't where you are in terms of (19:42) serving the Lord.

If you're single and God reveals something, you just up and run. But if you're (19:48) married, then you have to have that spouse on the same page. And sometimes that can be a more (19:54) complicated process.

So Paul is saying if you're not married, don't be driven to be married. But (20:00) if you do get married, it's not sinful, but here's going to be some challenges that you have. (20:06) He says, I say this for your profit, not that I may put a leash on you, but for what is proper, (20:12) that you may serve the Lord without distraction.

But if any man thinks he's behaving improperly (20:17) towards his virgin, if she is past the flower of the youth, and thus it must be, let him do (20:22) what he wishes. He does not sin, let them marry. Nevertheless, he who stands steadfast in his heart, (20:29) having no necessity, but has power over his own will has so determined his heart that he will (20:34) keep his virgin does well.

So then he who gives her marriage does well, but he who does not give (20:39) her marriage does better. A wife is bound by the law as long as her husband lives. But if her husband (20:46) dies, she's at liberty to be married to whomever she wishes only in the Lord.

But she is happier (20:53) if she remains as she is according to my judgment. And I think I also have the spirit of God. (20:58) So Paul's ending with advice for widows.

A widow's free to remarry anyone in the Lord. (21:09) That's a lot in this chapter here. And what would be the takeaway of this chapter here? (21:15) My takeaway would be that we understand the purpose of marriage, that God's created us to (21:20) be one flesh, and that's a serious thing.

And any time a divorce happens, that's also a very serious (21:29) thing. And that the biblical standard is to not divorce and to divorce only for adultery. (21:39) But for those who find themselves in those hard cases, God has made grace available to those (21:45) people.

Because we're in a fallen world, you know, in a perfect world there would never be any divorce, (21:56) but we don't live in a perfect world. We live in a world where (22:00) women are mistreated. We live in a world where children are mistreated.

We live in a world where (22:05) there are men who sexually traffic their wives and their children. We live in a world where men (22:12) murder their family members instead of cherish them. And so while there's some very strict (22:20) principles, God makes his grace available to those who are in those impossible situations.

(22:28) And whatever you do, wherever you are, whatever background you come from, (22:33) whether you've been married to the same spouse your whole life, whether you've lived your whole (22:37) life single, don't let worldly desires drive what you

do. Don't frame your view on marriage or divorce (22:46) because it suits the desires of your flesh, but to seek to please the Lord in all things. (22:55) To be focused on the Lord in all things.

And at this point, I would like to give out the call to (23:01) repentance. And you might be dealing with something that has nothing to do with this lesson, (23:07) but God may be speaking to you saying you're a sinner and you need a savior. Now is the acceptable (23:15) time to come to Jesus, to embrace him for salvation, to trust him for your salvation.

(23:24) And if you are dealing with this, now is the time to seek God, to draw close to God (23:31) wherever you are. And if you're under conviction for sin, repent. (23:39) Heavenly Father, we come right now in the name of Jesus.

And Father, we ask for you to draw us near. (23:47) We ask for us to be focused on you. And Lord, I've said many hard things today. I've said many things (23:54) that cross fault lines in the body of Christ with different points of view on what's acceptable in (24:01) marriage and divorce. And Father, what I've talked about for many is an academic. (24:09) It hits where they live.

There may be people listening to this that their husband is beating (24:15) on them, their wife is beating on them. And they're in an impossible situation. I know my own mom was (24:24) in this impossible situation.

She didn't want to divorce my dad, but she felt she had no choice. (24:33) And there are many in that. And so Father, we just ask for, we ask for grace to be administered.

(24:40) But we also ask for people to also respect your commandments on this issue. (24:49) Obedience to your commandments and all we do, that all we do should be as unto the Lord and not to (24:55) ourselves, not to our flesh. We pray all these things in Jesus' name and all God's people said, amen.

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