

# On Marriage and Separation (1 Corinthians 7:1-24)

Expository Lessons from Paul's First Letter to the Corinthians

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## I. Review from Prior Lessons

- a. Paul was writing to the Corinthian church, addressing a number of problems there that he had become aware of and answering questions they had raised to him.
- b. The first problem Paul addressed was division in the church, a sectarian spirit. Disciples in Corinth had been strongly identifying with prominent leaders (Paul, Apollos, Peter, etc.) rather than simply identifying as followers of Christ.
- c. The second major sin addressed by Paul was sexual immorality in the church. In this case, the problem was incest: "a man has his father's wife". This was a sin that Paul said even the pagan Gentiles did not practice!
  - i. Related to that, Paul emphasized the serious problem of the church's tolerance of serious sin in their midst and challenged them to expel the wicked person from the church.
- d. Paul also addressed the problem of Christians suing other Christians, taking them to court in front of the Gentiles.
- e. In the current lesson, on **1 Corinthians chapter 7:1-24**, Paul is answering a question that the Corinthians asked him and goes on to talk at length about issues related to marriage and marriage challenges (including separation).

## II. Relations Between Husbands and Wives

- a. Read **1 Corinthians 7:1-7**.
- b. **Question:** What was the question that the Corinthians had asked Paul about, that he was answering here?
  - i. "Now concerning the things of which you wrote to me: It is good for a man not to touch a woman...." (**1 Corinthians 7:1**, NKJV)
  - ii. John Chrysostom, in an expository series of sermons he gave on **1 Corinthians**, gave his opinion regarding what that question might have been.
    1. "Wherefore he says, 'Now concerning the things whereof ye wrote unto me.' For they had written to him, '*Whether it was*

*right to abstain from one's wife, or not:'* and writing back in answer to this and giving rules about marriage, he introduces also the discourse concerning virginity: 'It is good for a man not to touch a woman.' 'For if,' says he, 'you inquire what is the excellent and greatly superior course, it is better not to have any connection whatever with a woman: but if you ask what is safe and helpful to thine own infirmity, be connected by marriage.' But since it was likely, as also happens now, that the husband might be willing but the wife not, or perhaps the reverse, mark how he discusses each case."

- a. (Source: John Chrysostom, *Homily No. 19 on 1 Corinthians*)
- b. Consider how reasonable Chrysostom's case is for assessing what that initial question might have been, as we consider Paul's response in the text we are studying.
- c. It is good for a man 'not to touch' a woman.
  - i. I have heard some people make the claim that there should be absolutely no physical contact between any men and women (spiritual brothers and sisters) in the church, based on this statement by Paul.
    1. **Question:** Is that a reasonable application? What do you think? No shaking hands? Absolutely no contact whatsoever?
    2. **Question:** Do we take everything in the Bible literally? How would you answer that question?
      - a. Did Jesus and the apostles always speak literally, or did they *ever speak figuratively*?
      - b. Examples where Jesus spoke figuratively include:
        - i. "Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up." (**John 2:19**)
          1. Here Jesus uses the term "temple" figuratively, to refer to His physical body.
        - ii. "Go tell Herod, *that fox...*" (**Luke 13:32**)
          1. Here, Jesus uses a figure of speech, referring to Herod as a "fox", pointing to the king's crafty, deceitful character.

- iii. "...Our friend Lazarus *sleeps*, but I go that I may *wake him up*." (**John 11:11**)
  - 1. Here Jesus is speaking figuratively, regarding death (sleep) and resurrection (being awakened).
- 3. The goal in reading Scripture is to strive to understand the speaker (or writer)'s intent: whether he meant something to be taken literally or figuratively. Or whether he was using a figure of speech.
  - a. The danger today is that when the Scriptures say something a person doesn't like or does not want to believe or obey, he or she will re-interpret it in a way that makes it easier for them.
  - b. Let's seek the original intent and avoid that temptation!
- 4. **Question:** Did Jesus ever *touch women*, or allow himself to be touched physically by them?
  - a. Recall the woman who washed Jesus' feet and dried them with her hair.
    - i. "And behold, a woman in the city who was a sinner, when she knew that Jesus sat at the table in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster flask of fragrant oil, and stood at His feet behind Him weeping; and she began to wash His feet with her tears, and wiped them with the hair of her head; and she kissed His feet and anointed them with the fragrant oil." (**Luke 7:37-38**, NKJV)
  - b. Also, the instance where a woman "touched" Jesus (but it seemed that everyone was crowded around Him and touching Him).
    - i. "Now a woman, having a flow of blood for twelve years, who had spent all her livelihood on physicians and could not be healed by any, came from behind and touched the border of His garment. And immediately her flow of blood stopped. And Jesus said, 'Who touched Me?' When all denied it, Peter and those with him said, 'Master, the multitudes throng and press You, and You say, "Who touched Me?"' But Jesus

said, ‘Somebody touched Me, for I perceived power going out from Me.’ Now when the woman saw that she was not hidden, she came trembling; and falling down before Him, she declared to Him in the presence of all the people the reason she had touched Him and how she was healed immediately.” (**Luke 8:43–47**, NKJV)

- ii. While many had physical contact with Jesus, this woman was “touching” Him with special intent.
- ii. It seems to me, in context, that Paul is speaking about touching with a special intent (sexual arousal).
  - 1. If we think about it, when a woman was baptized, a man would touch her; also, the woman worthy of being added to the widows was known for “washing the feet of the saints”. (**1 Timothy 5:10**) Therefore, it seems unreasonable to me that Paul here was forbidding *all forms of physical contact* between men and women.
- iii. While it strikes me that there is no absolute prohibition against chaste physical contact between men and women, what is appropriate is likely to vary from congregation to congregation and from culture to culture. However, some principles should be kept in mind, regardless of where we are located.
  - 1. Jesus, addressing the sin of lust, said in the Sermon on the Mount:
    - a. “And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and cast it from you; for it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish, than for your whole body to be cast into hell.” (**Matthew 5:30**, NKJV)
  - 2. Also, recall that Paul told Timothy: “Do not rebuke an older man, but exhort him as a father, younger men as brothers, older women as mothers, *younger women as sisters, with all purity.*” (**1 Timothy 5:1–2**, NKJV)
    - a. We should treat younger women as we would treat our own physical sisters: with absolute purity!
    - b. While customs may vary from culture to culture, this principle is timeless.
- d. Physical relations between husband and wife.

- i. Do not deprive one another except by mutual consent and for a limited time.
- ii. The husband has authority over the wife's body, and the wife has authority over the husband's body.
  - 1. This is part of the "one flesh" relationship that Paul previously discussed, going back to **Genesis 2**.
  - 2. "Or do you not know that he who is joined to a harlot is one body with her? For 'the two, He says, 'shall become one flesh.'" (**1 Corinthians 6:16**, NKJV, where Paul is quoting from **Genesis 2:24**)
  - 3. The *two* shall become one.
    - a. Here we are in the Boston area, very close to the City of Somerville, which is just north of Boston and Cambridge. Recall that Massachusetts was the first state in the US to legalize same-sex marriages (based on a state court decision on May 17, 2004).
      - i. That set a precedent that eventually impacted the entire United States.
      - ii. What can we expect next?
    - b. From the *New York Times*, July 1, 2020:
      - i. "SOMERVILLE, Mass. — At the tail end of a City Council meeting last week, so quickly and quietly that you could have easily missed it, a left-leaning Massachusetts city expanded its notion of family to include people who are polyamorous, or maintaining consenting relationships with multiple partners.
      - ii. "Under its new domestic partnership ordinance, the city of Somerville now grants polyamorous groups the rights held by spouses in marriage, such as the right to confer health insurance benefits or make hospital visits.
      - iii. "J.T. Scott, a city councilor who supported the move, said he believed it was the first such municipal ordinance in the country.

- iv. "...He said he knew of at least two dozen polyamorous households in Somerville, which has a population of about 80,000."
- c. If we watch which way the tide is going, it is not hard to see what is likely to come up next: polygamy.
  - i. It may be introduced into your area of the country by leftists (as in the case of Somerville, MA) or via Muslim communities (since the Koran permits a man to have *up to four* wives).
  - ii. Polygamy was permitted among the Jews under the Law of Moses and was practiced in several other cultures in the ancient world.
- d. However, Jesus rolled back marriage to the *original plan of God*: one man and one woman, united until death. Jesus changed what Moses had permitted (polygamy and divorce/remarriage). The *two* (not 3, not 5) shall become one flesh. The wife has authority over her husband's body, not joint ownership with multiple other wives.
- iii. The New Testament teaching on marriage affirms that the husband is the head of the wife. (**1 Corinthians 11:3**) However, *Paul also says that there is an aspect of equality* in the marriage relationship.
  1. The two *belong to each other*.
  2. They are one flesh, and the wife has authority over her husband's body.
  3. They can refrain from marital relations *only if both mutually consent*.
- e. That you may give yourselves to prayer and fasting.
  - i. Note that in most modern Bibles (where the New Testament is based on the UBS text, relying heavily on a few of the most ancient extant manuscripts, which happen to be from the vicinity of Egypt), the text only refers to "prayer" (and does not say "and fasting").
  - ii. The KJV and NKJV are based on the Textus Receptus. That text, and the majority of New Testament Greek manuscripts, include "*...and fasting*".

- iii. The idea of fasting is denial of the flesh, to intensify our prayers when we appeal to the Lord.
  - 1. Obviously, Christians are to pray every day; perhaps even to pray “without ceasing”. (**1 Thessalonians 5:17**) So, does it make sense that Paul is telling them to abstain from sexual relations whenever they are praying?
- iv. On the importance of fasting.
  - 1. This passage is a meaningless artifact to most Christians, since they never fast (or do so very rarely). However, fasting was a regular part of the Christian spiritual life in the beginning.
  - 2. Jesus assumed that His followers would be devoted to prayer, giving alms to the poor, *and fasting*.
    - a. “Moreover, *when you fast*, do not be like the hypocrites, with a sad countenance. For they disfigure their faces that they may appear to men to be fasting. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward.” (**Matthew 6:16**, NKJV)
      - i. Note that Jesus said “when you fast”, not “if”. He assumed that His followers would be fasting, and He gave them instructions on how to do that with the right attitude.
    - b. “Then they said to Him, ‘Why do the disciples of John fast often and make prayers, and likewise those of the Pharisees, but Yours eat and drink?’ And He said to them, ‘Can you make the friends of the bridegroom fast while the bridegroom is with them? But the days will come when the bridegroom will be taken away from them; then *they will fast in those days*.’” (**Luke 5:33–35**, NKJV)
      - i. Jesus taught that after His death and resurrection, His friends/followers would be committed to fasting!
  - 3. **Questions:** How common was fasting in the early church? How frequently did Christians fast in the beginning?
    - a. Muslims are noted for fasting during the month of Ramadan; *for 28 days*, no food (or drink?) from sunrise until sundown.

- b. However, in the early church, Christians would fast regularly on Wednesdays and Fridays, plus at other special times.
  - i. Therefore, it would not have been unusual for a Christian to observe *over 100 days of fasting each year!*
  - ii. For more information on the frequency and practices of fasting among Christians in the early church, see *Dictionary of Early Christian Beliefs*, ed. David Bercot, article on 'Fasting'.
- c. **Challenge for Us:** Let us strive to restore effective fasting and prayer as an integral part of our spiritual lives. This calls for us to deny the flesh (abstaining from food, as well as from sexual relations) for defined periods of time for spiritual reasons.
- f. Some thoughts on the subject of Satan, who is mentioned here by Paul.
  - i. "Do not deprive one another except with consent for a time, that you may give yourselves to fasting and prayer; and come together again so *that Satan does not tempt you* because of your lack of self-control." (**1 Corinthians 7:5**, NKJV)
  - ii. When you are reading the New Testament, I encourage you to open your eyes to see *how often* and *how prominently* Satan is mentioned!
  - iii. I believe we cannot *fully appreciate* what Jesus did for us, and what we are up against in the Christian life, if we do not *understand Satan, his mission and his tactics*.
    1. **Question:** How far can you get in any book in the New Testament before you come across a direct reference to Satan?
    2. Consider how prominent Satan is in the Scriptural explanations of how we have been saved by Jesus.
      - a. "Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that *through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil....*" (**Hebrews 2:14**, NKJV)
      - b. "He who sins is of the devil, for the devil has sinned from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil." (**1 John 3:8**, NKJV)



- c. Jesus told Paul, on the road to Damascus: "I will deliver you from the Jewish people, as well as from the Gentiles, to whom I now send you, to open their eyes, in order to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who are sanctified by faith in Me." (**Acts 26:17–18**, NKJV)
3. The apostles understood that we are in a spiritual war zone, with an enemy that is crafty, powerful and out to destroy us every day. Consider the *closing arguments* of Peter in **1 Peter 5**, and Paul in **Ephesians 6**.
- a. "*Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. Resist him, steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same sufferings are experienced by your brotherhood in the world.*" (**1 Peter 5:8–9**, NKJV)
  - b. "Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand *against the wiles of the devil*. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but *against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places*. Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand." (**Ephesians 6:10–13**, NKJV)
    - i. We need the armor of God to protect us from the assaults of a powerful enemy.
    - ii. I am encouraged in this battle against a dangerous foe by the words of James:
      - 1. "...Resist the devil and he will flee from you." (**James 4:7**, NKJV)

#### 4. Challenges for Us:

- a. See an important aspect of the mission of Jesus as *dying to free us from Satan's control*. He came to destroy the works of the devil.
- b. See Satan as our ever-present enemy. He is always tempting and attacking us.

- c. Pray every day as Jesus called us to:
  - i. “And do not lead us into temptation, *But deliver us from the evil one...*” (**Matthew 6:13**, NKJV)
- d. Avoid putting ourselves in temptation, especially sexual temptation, and let’s look out for our spouses, as Paul explains in **1 Corinthians 7**.
  - i. Satan has used sexual temptation to bring down many great men. Consider how even David, Solomon and Samson were brought down in this way.
  - ii. However, we also have heroes like Joseph and Phinehas whose examples can inspire us.

### III. Instructions to Unmarried Christians (Including Widows)

- a. Paul addresses three different groups in turn, one at a time:
  - i. Unmarried Christians (**1 Corinthians 7:8-9**),
  - ii. Christians who are married to other Christians (**1 Corinthians 7:10-11**), and
  - iii. Christians who are married to unbelievers (**1 Corinthians 7:12-24**).
- b. Read **1 Corinthians 7:8-9**.
- c. Paul says the unmarried would be better off remaining single, if they are able to exercise self-control.
  - i. **Question to Those Who are Single:** Do you believe you have “the gift” he is referring to?
- d. It is better to marry than to burn.
  - i. “...but if they cannot exercise self-control, let them marry. For it is better to marry than to burn *with passion*.” (**1 Corinthians 7:9**, NKJV)
  - ii. The italicized, added words “with passion” (found in the NKJV translation) are *not in the Greek text!*
  - iii. **Question:** What is the meaning of the Greek word translated “to burn” here? What does this *burning* refer to?
    - 1. The Greek word in **1 Corinthians 7:9** translated “to burn” here simply means to put something into a fire; for example, a piece of wood or silver.

iv. There are two options that I am aware of that this “burning” might refer to.

1. **Option 1:** To burn with passion.

a. This is the interpretation of “burning” assumed by John Chrysostom, among others.

i. “For it is better to marry than to burn.’ He indicates how great is the tyranny of concupiscence [strong sexual desire]. What he means is something like this: If you have to endure much violence and burning desire, withdraw yourself from your pains and toils, lest haply [by chance or accident] you be subverted.”

1. (Source: John Chrysostom, *Homily No. 19 on 1 Corinthians*)

b. Consider a similar use of “burning” in **Wisdom of Sirach 23:17**, and possibly also the reference to “fire” in **Proverbs 6:27-28** (corresponding to **Proverbs 6:32-33** in the LXX) in the warning about sexual immorality.

2. **Option 2:** To burn in hell, receiving painful, unending punishment.

a. This is the interpretation assumed by Tertullian. See Ante-Nicene Fathers volume 4, pages 52, 60 and 92.

b. Also, consider New Testament references to “burning” applied to eternal punishment, as in **Luke 3:17** and **Matthew 13:40**.

c. Recall that Jesus warned of the *eternal punishment of fire* several times in His teaching, including in **Matthew 5:22**, **Matthew 25:41** and **Mark 9:43-48**.

3. **Bottom Line:** I am not sure which kind of ‘burning’ Paul had in mind when he said, “it is better to marry than *to burn*”. There were two different ways in which this term was understood among early Christian writers.

a. However, either way, it presents a clear warning for us!

#### IV. Instructions for Christians Married to Other Christians

a. Read **1 Corinthians 7:10-11**.

- b. To the Christians married to other Christians, Paul says his instructions are not from himself but “from the Lord”.
  - i. These instructions were based on what Jesus had taught regarding the permanence of marriage.
  - ii. Recall that Moses had permitted divorce followed by remarriage (see **Deuteronomy 24**), as well as polygamy (a husband having more than one wife).
  - iii. **Question:** What had Jesus taught that Paul was referring to here?
    - 1. “Furthermore it has been said, ‘Whoever divorces his wife, let him give her a certificate of divorce.’ But I say to you that whoever divorces his wife for any reason except sexual immorality causes her to commit adultery; and *whoever marries a woman who is divorced commits adultery.*” (**Matthew 5:31–32**, NKJV)
      - a. Here Jesus introduces two new teachings (changing the instructions that Moses had handed down in the Law of Moses):
        - i. A man can divorce his wife only in the case of sexual immorality on her part; and
        - ii. No man is permitted to marry a divorced woman.
    - 2. “Whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery; and whoever marries her who is divorced from her husband commits adultery.” (**Luke 16:18**, NKJV)
      - a. The husband who divorces his wife cannot remarry; doing so would be committing adultery.
      - b. Marrying a divorced woman also is considered to be committing adultery (as in **Matthew 5**).
        - i. Note that in another discussion on divorce, in **Mark 10:11-12**, Jesus explains that this restriction also applies to the woman. She cannot divorce her husband and then remarry, either.
    - 3. Conclusions from the Scriptures on divorce cited above include the following:
      - a. Divorce is limited to the case where a wife commits immorality against her husband. However, neither the

husband nor the wife can remarry after that. To do so would be to “commit adultery”.

- b. Since adultery is a sin against someone you are married to, this indicates that *divorce does not completely sever the marriage bond*.
  - i. Before God, the marriage bond *remains after a divorce* and continues until death.
- c. The teaching by Jesus in **Matthew 19** is sometimes used to make the case that there is an ‘exception clause’ in **Matthew 19:9**, under which someone (at least a husband) can remarry *if his wife has been unfaithful*.
  - i. However, that interpretation would clearly contradict what Jesus said in the two passages quoted above.
  - ii. Historically, and maintained much longer in the West (including in the Roman Catholic church, at least in terms of official teachings, even if frequently overridden in practice), the understanding was that the ‘exception’ applied to divorcing the spouse, but *not to the remarriage part* of the statement.
    1. So, while divorce was forbidden in most cases, there is an exception (in case of adultery by one’s spouse) that permitted divorce. However this exception does allow either spouse to remarry, something which Jesus refers to as “adultery”.
    2. Some have interpreted the ‘exception clause’ as pertaining to both divorce and remarriage (allowing a person to divorce and remarry while their first spouse was alive). However, such an interpretation would have this statement contradicting the other key passages where Jesus and Paul teach on divorce and remarriage. Sound Bible interpretation requires us to consider the unity of all the relevant passages of Scripture on any topic.

- iii. One condition sometimes used today to justify remarriage after divorce is when the divorced person's first marriage and divorce happened before the person became a Christian (before baptism).
  - 1. However, while all of a person's sins are washed away in baptism (**Acts 22:16**), that act does not 'wash away' a prior marriage!
- iv. What Jesus teaches is profoundly disturbing in light of how common divorce and remarriage have become in Christian circles. However, He calls this "adultery", and the New Testament is clear that adulterers will not inherit the kingdom. (**1 Corinthians 6:9-10**)
- v. *[Note: Following this lesson, several members of the church requested a separate topical message devoted to explaining the historic understanding of the New Testament teaching regarding divorce and remarriage. That lesson, which provides more detailed teaching on that subject than the current message, was given on August 20, 2023.]*
- iv. Now, let us consider the instructions that Paul gives here to those married to other believers.
  - 1. "Now to the married I command, yet not I but the Lord: A wife is not to depart from her husband. But even if she does depart, let her remain unmarried or be reconciled to her husband. And a husband is not to divorce his wife." (**1 Corinthians 7:10-11**, NKJV)
  - 2. Paul gives *only two options* when major strife comes up in a Christian marriage.
    - a. Separate and remain celibate (cannot divorce and remarry); OR
    - b. Reconcile.
      - i. Those are the only two options!
      - ii. This is completely consistent with what Jesus taught in the gospels.

## V. If Married to an Unbeliever

- a. Read **1 Corinthians 7:12-24**.
- b. This is for someone who comes to faith while they are married to an unbeliever.
  - i. That is the significance of the statement regarding being at peace in the state you were in “when you were called”.
  - ii. This refers to someone who *already has* an unbelieving spouse. Chrysostom and Tertullian make a point that this statement by Paul *does not* permit someone who is already a Christian to marry an unbeliever.
    1. From John Chrysostom:
      - a. “For the question now is not about those who have never yet come together, but about those who are already joined. He did not say, ‘If any one *wish to take* an unbelieving wife’, but, ‘If any one *has* an unbelieving wife’ (**1 Corinthians 7:12**). Which means, If any after marrying or being married have received the word of godliness, and then the other party which had continued in unbelief still yearn for them to dwell together, let not the marriage be broken off.”
        - i. (Source: John Chrysostom, *Homily No. 19 on 1 Corinthians*)
    2. From Tertullian, writing c. 205 AD:
      - a. “[*Title*] CHAP. II.—OF THE APOSTLE’S MEANING IN 1 CORINTHIANS 7:12–14
      - b. “Therefore, when in these days a certain woman removed her marriage from the pale of the Church, and united herself to a Gentile, and when I remembered that this had in days gone by been done by others: wondering at either their own waywardness or else the double-dealing of their advisers, in that there is no scripture which holds forth a licence of this deed,—‘I wonder,’ said I, ‘whether they flatter themselves on the ground of that passage of the first (Epistle) to the Corinthians, where it is written: “If any of the brethren has an unbelieving wife, and she consents to the matrimony, let him not dismiss her; similarly, let not a believing woman, married to an unbeliever, if she finds

her husband agreeable (to their continued union), dismiss him: for the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the believing wife, and the unbelieving wife by the believing husband; else were your children unclean.” (1 **Corinthians 7:12-14**)

- c. “It may be that, by understanding generally this monition regarding *married* believers, they think that licence is granted (thereby) to marry even unbelievers. God forbid that he who thus interprets (the passage) be *wittingly* ensnaring himself!
  - d. “But it is manifest that this scripture points to those believers who may have been found by the grace of God in (the state of) Gentile matrimony; according to the words themselves: ‘If,’ it says, ‘any believer *has* an unbelieving wife;’ it does not say, ‘*takes* an unbelieving wife.’
  - e. “It shows that it is the duty of one who, already living in marriage with an unbelieving woman, has presently been by the grace of God converted, to continue with his wife; for this reason, to be sure, in order that no one, after attaining to faith, should think that he must turn away from a woman who is now in some sense an ‘alien’ and ‘stranger.’”
    - i. (Source: Tertullian, *To His Wife*, book 2, chapter 2; found in Ante-Nicene Fathers vol. 4, pp. 44–45)
- iii. Also, consider the instructions in **1 Corinthians 7:39**. Those widows who remarry are permitted to marry “only in the Lord”.
1. From Tertullian, in the same work cited immediately above:
    - a. “‘The woman, when her husband is dead, is free: let her marry whom she wishes, only in the LORD.’ (1 **Corinthians 7:39**) Here, at all events, there is no need for reconsidering; for what there might have been reconsideration about, the Spirit has oracularly declared. For fear we should make an ill use of what he says, ‘Let her marry whom she wishes,’ he has added, ‘only in the LORD,’ that is, in the name of the LORD, which is, undoubtedly, ‘to a Christian.’”



- i. (Source: Tertullian, To His Wife, book 2, chapter 2; found in Ante-Nicene Fathers vol. 4, p. 45)
  - c. Regarding children being clean, Chrysostom (in *Homily No. 19 on 1 Corinthians*) ties this back to the idea that the two are becoming one.
    - i. However, in this case, the bond is holy, even if the unbeliever is an idolator or in other serious sin. The union and the offspring are holy because of the believing spouse.
  - d. Some have pointed out that two different terms are used.
    - i. The husband can “*divorce*” his wife; however
    - ii. The wife can “*depart from*” her husband.
      - 1. The idea I have heard some Bible teachers advance is that the wife could not actually divorce her husband (which was not allowed under the Law of Moses).
        - a. Similar to the idea that while the President of the US can *fire* a cabinet officer, an unhappy cabinet officer could only *resign* from his position.
        - b. Since he was in the subordinate role, he could sever the relationship but not actually fire the President!
    - iii. On the other hand, Jesus did speak about the situation of *a woman divorcing her husband* in **Mark 10**.
      - 1. “And if a woman divorces her husband and marries another, she commits adultery.” (**Mark 10:12**, NKJV)
- e. I do not believe that the statement “not under bondage” in **1 Corinthians 7:15** means that the divorced person is allowed to remarry.
  - i. Literally, it says, “not enslaved”. See how this Greek word is used elsewhere in the LXX and NT. It refers to enslaving someone (active voice) or being enslaved. It is not applied to the marriage bond.
  - ii. The term applied to marriage is being bound vs. loosened, or being tied together vs. being freed up (see **1 Corinthians 7:27**).