

Odds and Ends. Various thoughts emerging from a review of Chapter 7

Commitment

People today seem to be afraid of commitment. People seem to seek short term encounters whether it be jobs, leisure, home or the opposite sex. Especially guys. But the attitude is infecting women as well. Yet God invariably goes for the long term commitment. He is eternally committed within the Trinity. He goes for a permanent relationship when He saves us. We cannot be lost! Our future is sure, safe and secure. He wants that same loving security demonstrated in marriage. He established marriage to be a lifetime commitment to one person, with no provision for voluntary escape for any reason other than death. Don't even think of entering a marriage with an escape plan. There are none, scripturally. Only death or, sadly, fornication can break the tie.

Matthew 19:6 What therefore God has joined together let not man put asunder.

Let's look at life. Paul endorses both marriage and singleness. So which do we seek? And why?

Why do you want to get married? Marriage is not intended to be a status symbol or ego builder. It is intended as expression of mutual sacrificial love and respect resulting in companionship, friendship, confiding fellowship, and intimacy as with none other. It mirrors the infinite love and eternal communion within the Trinity.

Why do you want to remain single? Is it your solemn, sincere intent to devote your life to serving the Lord? If so, super, go to it! If otherwise, is there some selfish motive? Are you reluctant to marry and sacrifice your personal habits and leisure activities to devote yourself to another person's benefit? Fornication is not an option.

Thoughts not specifically addressed in Chapter 7.

- ▶ Only heterosexual marriage is recognized by God. All else, whether legal or illegal in the law of the land, is an abomination to God.
- ▶ Sexual contact, even if short of full intercourse is sinful, outside of marriage. It is literally "good for a man not to touch a woman" (v.1) unless married.
- ▶ Keep pure in encounters and relationships. Timothy, a young man devotedly serving the Lord, is warned especially regarding undertaking earnest, spiritual entreaties with young women. Such encounters, though sometimes necessary and well intentioned, if not approached "with all purity" could very unintentionally, and unexpectedly, lead to unsuitable physical

intimacy of some kind. 1 Timothy 5:2.

- ▶ Women are to adorn themselves modestly, (guys too!) avoiding exposing themselves either through abbreviated and/or loose clothing or through tight clothing. The Mosaic Law roundly forbade uncovering another's nakedness. While this implies undress for an evil purpose, there is real danger in careless dress as well. That is stylish in the world today. Fabric is not so scarce or expensive that clothes cannot cover a little more and be a little looser, although not too loose, either.
- ▶ A man who looks upon a woman to lust after her has committed adultery with her already in his heart, Matthew 5:28. But don't be confused. A brother in Christ, walking with the Lord, can see a woman and not lust. If he looks upon a woman with intent to lust he is guilty. If one finds lust arising in his heart unbidden, he needs to look away, and maybe get away.
- ▶ **"Flee fornication"** (6:18) applies to **lusting** or **fantasizing** as well as **doing**. This applies to images in print and on screen as well. Sisters can make life easier if they dress modestly, and avoid make up or behavior that makes them look sexually aroused. This look awakens very strong instincts in a guy which, while wholesome in a marriage, are difficult to quell otherwise. "Feminists" sometimes insist upon a woman's "right" to dress and behave any way she wishes to express herself. That may be legal and popular in this country but a sister in the Lord should avoid getting caught up the trends of the world much less in its philosophy.

31 The fashion of this world (age) passes away.

Other scriptures regarding this include Proverbs 5:3; 6:10; 31:25; 1 Tim 2:9-10; 1 Peter 2:2-5.

- ▶ Nevertheless, the guy is responsible to maintain **self control** in all circumstances. No excuses. He is the head, or the "head to be" potentially of the couple. He is responsible for his own virginity, and to protect and cherish the chastity of any woman he meets. He should be able to unashamedly receive her in marriage (or even to present her in marriage to his best friend) without having even having attempted to seduce or use her dishonorably.

1 Corinthians 11:2 For I am jealous as to you with a jealousy [which is] of God; for I have espoused you unto one man, to present [you] a chaste virgin to Christ.

There is no better time to begin to exercise that privilege and responsibility than one's youth.

- I. On the other side of the coin, despite chapter 7:2-5, he should not attempt to **possess and control** her as his property. She is not to be made his slave. A husband is not called to subdue his wife. When a couple marries she is given, and gives herself, to him, and he takes her, not as a possession but a wife to be loved. Much unwarranted jealousy and senseless disputes arise when one person views another as their possession. Even while going together, one who somehow thinks he/she owns the other is deeply hurt or goes ballistic if the other breaks up with them. And if a person finds they are viewed as that by their suitor, they should avoid marriage to that person. See 1 Corinthians 7:21. They are self-centered to say the least and will make life miserable.
- II. In contrast, the righteous hurt and rage due to betrayal by a spouse are graphically described in Prov 6 in the husband of an unfaithful wife. He blames the other man! **Adultery** is a particularly terrible, injurious and hurtful sin.
- III. **Divorce** is a terrible tragedy, often an out and out sin, and the result of sin, often a terrible sin. In case of children, it emotionally and spiritually harms tender little ones (sometimes beyond repair). And wreaks widespread waves of sorrow, anger (and hatred) and conflict amongst the families of those involved. Beware! The Lord is watching. Matthew 18:6. He hates putting away! Malachi 2:16. But Jehovah knows the anguish of jilted love, for He has been a victim of the most arrogant, unjustifiable, inconceivable, unfaithfulness on record. Israel has jilted Him. "Thou shalt have no other gods before Me." "All that Thou sayest we will do." Indeed! But are our hearts, toward the Lord who died for us, any better? If it were up to our faithfulness to ensure our eternity with Him would we miss it? Look at what calls itself His church today. The ultimate end of it, Babylon the Great, Mother of Harlots, is graphically described in Revelation 17 & 18. The point is, He feels what we go through with an unfaithful spouse or a divorce.
- IV. **Incompatible?** What if I make a mistake and marry "the wrong person," someone I shouldn't have? What if we find ourselves to be incompatible? Or, what if "I don't love him/her anymore?" The answer: Start loving them! Being a believer in that situation is a great

advantage for we are given the power to love one another. And we are instructed over and over again to love one another as believers. And we are exhorted to:

Ephesians 4:1,2 Walk....with all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love;

Ephesians 4:31 Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: 32 And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you. 5:1 Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children; 2 And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweetsmelling savour

We are to love all other believers. Certainly that would include our spouse!

What a blessing! What an opportunity to enjoy a lifetime in close contact with another saint of God, purchased by the blood of the Lamb and loved infinitely by Him, and the Father who gave His only Son for us, indwelt bodily by the same Holy Spirit. We are not only one in marriage, but one as brother and sister in Christ, to build up, lift up, shore up, one another together in love, and in the Lord. In one sense it shouldn't matter who we marry, if they are the Lord's. Nevertheless I believe He will lead two together that He wants together, if we want Him to and let Him. That means not going only by outward appearances, wealth, popularity, prestige (no trophy wives or trophy husbands), etc. Marry in the Lord. Or remain single, in the Lord.

To the glory of God. If whatever we do, even eating and drinking, is to be to the glory of God, then certainly something as serious as lifetime marriage, or lifetime singleness can be.

Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.

1 Corinthians 10:31

And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, [do] all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him.

Colossians 3:17

by Ron Canner, April 16, 2003.