

Week 12 **LEADER** Discussion Questions

**SPECIAL NOTE: Next week will be our last week of discussion questions for 2024!
We'll resume the questions in early January.**

LEADERS—PLEASE TAKE NOTE OF THIS:

- **THE DISCUSSION QUESTIONS WILL END AFTER NEXT WEEK UNTIL JAN 5TH.**
- **CHAPTER 7 WILL BE HANDLED A BIT DIFFERENTLY AT EACH CAMPUS SO YOU MAY FIND THAT THESE QUESTIONS NEED A BIT OF MODIFICATION TO MAKE THEM SUIT WHAT YOU HEARD ON SUNDAY.**
- **FOR NEXT WEEK, YOU MIGHT CONSIDER LOOKING OVER BOTH THIS WEEK'S QUESTIONS AND NEXT WEEK'S IN ORDER TO FIND A COMBINATION OF QUESTIONS THAT WORK FOR YOU.**

Text: 1 Cor 7:1-24¹

Icebreaker: What are your plans for Thanksgiving and Christmas? What will your LifeGroup schedule be for the rest of the year?

If you haven't done so already, this is a good week to talk about the rest of the year and what your schedule will be. When will you stop meeting? Will you have a LifeGroup Christmas party (highly encouraged)? Will someone be alone over Thanksgiving or Christmas who you could invite to join you?

1. Read this week's passage. What stands out to you from the text or from the sermon you heard Sunday?

2. Verses 1-5 begin Paul's response to a misguided belief that it's good to avoid sex even in marriage. How would you summarize Paul's reply in these verses?

For background, this idea likely came from a belief that since sexual immorality was so rampant, it was best to avoid sex altogether. Another view was that sex within marriage should be strictly limited to procreation—a practice which was known to encourage husbands to seek sexual fulfillment outside of marriage (and was culturally acceptable). For wives to do the same was considered wrong, though! In all, then, Paul's instruction

¹ Chapter 7 is our last section of 1 Corinthians before we transition to our Advent series. Each campus is taking a slightly different approach to chapter 7 but the questions this week and next (verses 25-40) will cover the entire chapter. These questions will resume in early January when we pick back up in 1 Corinthians 8.

that the wife has authority over her husband's body was nothing but radical! Notice how sex is a kind of safeguard for marriage and that its focus is to please the other person rather than to primarily seek self-gratification. Notice as well that there are spiritual consequences at stake in the way Paul describes it (vv. 2, 5).

Application: From verses 3-5, what is the attitude or perspective a husband and wife should have about sexual intimacy? How does this compare with common attitudes about sex that you've heard expressed in our culture today?

3. What does Paul's instruction in verse 5 about a husband and wife's mutual commitment to prayer imply about God's desire for married couples in the church?

A mutual commitment to prayer implies that both spouses are believers. 2 Corinthians 6:14 is a verse often used to make the same point, but verse 5 in this week's passage is also support for the view that Christians ought to marry Christians.

Application: How can a husband and wife encourage each other's faith? How can a believing spouse who's married to an unbeliever find encouragement from others? Regarding the second question here, the reality is that Christians have at times married unbelievers. For them, the church ought to seek to encourage the faith of these "unequally yoked" believers and to seek the salvation of their unbelieving spouses.

4. Verses 10-16 relate to marriage and divorce. According to these verses, what kind of attitude should a Christian have toward divorce? When might it be permissible?

The scenario Paul seems to be addressing is one where two unbelieving people were married but then one of them became a Christ-follower. Paul's instruction is that the believing spouse should not seek to end the marriage but to live peacefully alongside the unbelieving spouse, hoping for their salvation. IF the unbelieving spouse leaves the marriage ("abandonment"), the believing spouse is free to remarry in the future.

Application: Whether you are single or married, how do you think the church can be a place where marriages are strengthened and those who have been divorced can be encouraged?

5. Verses 17-24 appear as a change in topic but more likely are meant as an instruction to be applied to marriage and singleness. Why might someone who has recently come to faith in Jesus seek to change their marital status?

The fact that the verses before this passage and immediately after this passage are about marriage and singleness helps to set the context for how we should interpret and apply these verses. Someone who is married who has just become a believer might think she should divorce her unbelieving husband. Conversely, someone who is single who has recently come to faith might believe he should get married to please God, thinking that God values marriage more than singleness. Paul wants the Corinthians to avoid acting too quickly without first considering that Christians can serve the Lord in a variety of life circumstances and situations.

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to loving God and loving others.*

Application: What does this instruction teach us about the value of both marriage and singleness from God's perspective? Do you think our culture shares this perspective? How about our church?

There will be more on the goodness of singleness next week!

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