

1 Corinthians 7:10-16

Answers to Hard Questions

Intro: Chapters 1-6 Paul is responding to problems – he heard about in the Church in Corinth

A)Chapter 7 – He begins to answer questions that the Corinthians had wrote to him about - **Now concerning the things of which you wrote to me:**

B)Their first questions seemed to be about Marriage / singleness and Divorce

1)while living in a Sex crazed – pagan culture

C)We know we are supposed to be different from the world – so how do we navigate these trepid waters

D)First Paul deals with Marriage struggles between Believers

10 Now to the married I command, yet not I but the Lord: A wife is not to depart from her husband.

11 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.

A)Here we see that Paul is reminding the Corinthians of what Jesus himself taught about Marriage and Divorce- Turn to Matthew 19

V.3 The Pharisees also came to Him, testing Him, and saying to Him, “Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for just any reason?”

A)**For just any reason:** These words were the center of the debate

B)The issue of divorce and remarriage was the hot controversy of the day.

1)Two schools of thought proposed by two influential rabbis fueled the debate..

C)Each school of thought understood that the Mosaic law gave permission for divorce in Deuteronomy24:1

A)Reason if your wife was found to be unclean

B)the question was, “What constitutes uncleanness?”

1)She doesn’t like to bathe?

The Liberal rabbi’s – School – uncleanness was anything about your wife that caused you to get sin. –

A)Your wife did something that upset you – anger comes out – grounds for divorce.

B)Saying anything negative about her husband’s mother would render a wife unclean

1)and justify her husband divorcing her.

Or if a husband saw a woman prettier to look upon than his wife,

A)His wife would be unclean by comparison and he would be justified in divorcing her.

B))If your wife – cooked you a bad meal! – Unclean - Divorce her: -

1)those Rabbi’s had a great following among those looking for a way out of their marriages.

The other school- Rabbi- Shammai, (a more strict and unpopular view) was very conservative

A)He said UNCLEANNESS – ADULTERY

B)So the Pharisees come to JESUS seeking to test him,- PICK SIDES

C)If He agreed with the liberal school of Rabbi Hillel,’

1) Accuse Jesus of not taking the Law of Moses seriously.

C)If He agreed with the strict school of Rabbi Shammai,

1)then Jesus would become unpopular with the multitude, who generally liked access to an easy divorce.

D)JESUS WISE RESPONSE -

V.4 And He answered and said to them, “Have you not read that He who made them at the beginning ‘made them male and female,’ and said, ‘For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh’? So then, they are no longer two but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate.”

Note this: Jesus takes them back to the word - Have you not read: Genesis – Marriage is introduced

A)The Pharisees wanted to talk about divorce and rabbinical opinions,

B)But Jesus goes back to the Scriptures to talk about the origins of marriage.

C)Always a good practice: Our opinion doesn't matter – what does God's word say: is what matters

D)God calls a husband and wife to come together as one, as one flesh.

1)There is a ONENESS – God recognizes in marriage that goes way beyond the sexual UNION

E)The law of God was not, that a man should forsake his wife whenever he had a mind to it,

1)but that he should rather forsake his father and mother than his wife; that he should cleave unto his wife,

V.6 Therefore what God has joined together let not man separate:

A) Jesus is seeking to elevate their view of marriage

- A spiritual and physical oneness in God's eyes

B)Marriage is a binding promise with God and each other

1)3 Fold cord is not easily broken – two lives intertwined in the Lord and his Word.

C)So first - Jesus is rebuking them for not taking God's word or marriage seriously

Notice how they respond V.7 They said to Him, "Why then did Moses command to give a certificate of divorce, and to put her away?"

A)Here in v.7 they are referring to Deuteronomy 24:1 **If uncleanness is found in your wife – you can give her a certificate of divorce**

B)2nd Jesus corrects their theology -

He said to them, "Moses, because of the hardness of your hearts, permitted you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it was not so.

C) Jesus notes that Moses never commanded this – but he permitted it. – Be clear on this

D)3rd Notice that Jesus defines uncleanness – as Sexual immorality – or adultery

And I say to you, whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another, commits adultery; and whoever marries her who is divorced commits adultery."

E)4th Jesus identifies that the heart of the problem was a heart problem

1)why it was permitted – Hardness of your hearts

Moses allowed Divorce: He saw the hardness of the hearts between husbands and wives – hurt so deep – trust broken –

A)Hearts of the victims or hearts of the violator so hard that he allowed them to divorce their wives

B)But Jesus makes it clear – that was never God's intent in the beginning –

1)What God has joined together – let not man separate.

C)So that is the teaching of Jesus that Paul is referring to here.

Turn back to 1 Corinthians 7

V.10 again 10 Now to the married I command, yet not I but the Lord: A wife is not to depart from her husband. 11 But even if she does depart,

A)Now Paul seems to note that there are situations where a wife says – I just can't live in this environment anymore –

B)I can't handle the way that he treats me – (NOTE- I am not talking about abuse- we will get to that in a few minutes)

C)But sometimes the tension in a marriage is so great that one person says –

1)I can't handle this right now – I am leaving

D)Paul is not affirming such a decision – but he is speaking realistically **that it does happen.**

But notice Paul gives two options for the person who leaves

A)#1 Remain unmarried – not free to divorce and marry someone else

B)#2 Be reconciled to your spouse

C)And a husband is not to divorce his wife.

1)Husbands if your wife – leaves that doesn't give you a green light to divorce her

D)Now I am going to share my opinion here about Separation –

1)this is what I have experienced in 36 yrs of Pastoral ministry

My opinion in extreme situations where the hurt is so deep and the tension is so strong – Separation can be constructive

A)Based on these conditions - #1 Both spouses are in agreement – that the purpose is for reconciliation

B)#2 Both spouses are committed to the work at the marriage

C)#3 Both agree to have their separation monitored by a pastor or marriage mentor.

D)#4 It is not for too long

If those four conditions are not a part of the separation process– my experience is 99.9% of the time that marriage ends in Divorce

A)So there are rare – exceptions where a separation time in a marriage might be helpful –

B)but it is DEFINITELY the exception

Bb)I think way too many people today -are looking for ways to run out of their marriages –

1)rather than seeing their marriage relationship is actually a tool that God is using to mold them into the image of Jesus

C)You do not have to be married long to discover that there will be times that your spouse will rub you the wrong way.

1)Thus marriage has been compared to sand paper – God uses to rub off the rub edges of our hearts

Prior to getting married I felt like I was an extremely unselfish guy.

A)I devoted tons of my time to my church and to serving the less fortunate.

B)In my mind – I thought I was an unselfish super giving and easy to get along with guy.

C)Then I got married and marriage revealed how selfish I really was. – Shocking – I didn't like it –

1)Then when we had kids it magnified it even more – Now I had to share Denise with my kids – and they often got preference over me

D)I found that I didn't like that – upset me – but also made me uncomfortable at the same time.

Big lesson to learn in marriage – folks – when your spouse is doing something that upsets you –

A)when they are rubbing you the wrong way Don't think – WHAT IS WRONG WITH THEM?

B)Ask the Lord – what is wrong with me?– Lord why is this bugging me so much?–

1)what is the rough edge you are wanting to deal with in me?

C)Marriage is like being on the Potter's wheel – the potter is sometimes pounding on the clay – pushing on the clay

1)NO ONE likes to be pushed or pounded right – MORE LORD

D)But the pushing and pounding is necessary – God is using it to make you more like Jesus

E)So don't run – don't seek to bail – Hang in there – God is working

But in that rare situation where a lot of damage has been done and trust has been broken – you just need a break

A)Paul says if the person departs – two options – remain unmarried or be reconciled

B)NEXT - Marriage to an unbeliever

12 But to the rest I, not the Lord, say:

A)Dealt with this last week – Paul is not circumventing what Jesus said – He is saying I am going to deal with something Jesus didn't deal with

B)Marriage between a believer and an unbeliever If any brother has a wife who does not believe, and she is willing to live with him, let him not divorce her. 13 And a woman who has a husband who does

not believe, if he is willing to live with her, let her not divorce him.

C) I am sure that there were those in Corinth -like today who came to Christ –

1) but their spouses were still unbelievers – pagans

And I have counseled enough people in that situation to know – it is hard

A) In becoming a Christian your life has been transformed – priorities practices and perspectives are being re-shaped by the gospel

B) The Holy Spirit is doing this work in your heart

– 1) You are gaining new friends who also share in your love for Jesus – God’s word

C) And it is hard when suddenly the thing that is most important and precious to you/ walk with Jesus

1) Can’t be shared with your spouse – the person on earth that you love the most.

And it is even worse when your spouse suddenly has animosity or even anger toward your faith in Jesus

A) Because as a Christian you are not interested in doing the things you used to do – getting High

B) Places that you are not comfortable – doing anymore as a Christ follower

C) The unbeliever gets angry – has animosity

Here is what often happens- that believer – can start longing for a marriage like relationship with someone who also loves Jesus

A) There is a temptation to want to bail on the marriage

B) Paul says – look being unequally yoked is not a grounds for divorce – as hard as it can be.

C) So if your unbelieving spouse wants to stay married to you – and live with you - **DO NOT DIVORCE THEM.**

D) Obvious reason - God hates divorce – there hasn’t been adultery - but here is another reason

14 For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the

husband; otherwise your children would be unclean, but now they are holy.

Paul says – your unbelieving spouse is sanctified by the marriage –

A) note Paul is not saying the spouse is saved

B) That is why he refers to them as unbelieving – only those who believe in Jesus are saved

1) The word sanctified – to be set apart –

C) What Paul is saying is the unbelieving spouse is set apart for special gospel influence while they are in that relationship

1) They are in a way better situation to have an encounter with Jesus who is in You – than they would be if they weren’t there.

D) It is the same idea that Peter gets at when he writes to wives in 1 Peter 3 *Wives, likewise, be submissive to your own husbands, that even if some do not obey the word, they, without a word, may be won by the conduct of their wives, ² when they observe your chaste conduct accompanied by fear.* 1 Peter 3:1-2

Same idea that Paul is getting at here – the unbeliever is sanctified – set apart for special gospel influence by the conduct of their spouse

A) Not nagging – Bible verses on the toilet seat – ten commandments in the lunch bag

B) Your conduct – hopefully they begin to see something in you that they are missing

C) So the unbelieving spouse is sanctified – set apart of special gospel influence and the kids are Holy instead of unclean

1) What does that mean?

D) Again this is a similar idea to the spouse – Children living in a house with two unbelieving parents – are devoid of gospel influence in home

1) Unfortunately they are potentially subjected to much that is unclean or unholy

E) Things that their parents are doing that are displeasing to the Lord

But when there is a believer in the home there is great opportunity for gospel influence to happen.

A) In that way the children are holy – again the idea is set apart – for gospel influence – set apart to have opportunity to meet Jesus

B) If you are in that situation – Bring your kids to church – pray with them – do Bible stories with them

1) What if my spouse says – no – wife – aren't I to submit

C) This would be one of those situations where – defiance is permitted – you have to obey God rather than man

1) Mandate from the Lord to parents – raise your kids in the Lord

D) Ultimately your child will have to choose for themselves –

1) but you have a tremendous opportunity for influence them while they are young

So first Paul deals with the situation if the unbeliever who wants to stay

A) But what if the unbeliever departs

15 But if the unbeliever departs, let him depart; a brother or a sister is not under bondage in such cases. But God has called us to peace

B) Now what would be the bondage that Paul is referring to in that situation? –

C) Refers back to V. 11 The bondage of having to remain unmarried or be reconciled –

1) My spouse doesn't believe -they left me – nothing to do with me – but they are not going to divorce me

D) Paul is saying in that situation – you are free to leave that marriage –

1) you are not in bondage to stay in it – stay unmarried –

Stay in limbo -

E) Now Don't file the next day – you want to give the Lord the opportunity to work

1) Maybe your unbelieving spouse will realize what they are missing and want to come back and come to Jesus

PT of V. 16 For how do you know, O wife, whether you will save your husband? Or how do you know, O husband, whether you will save your wife?

Now one last thing I want to touch on here and I want you to listen very closely.

A) Does departure have to be Physical? – My opinion – NO

B) Sometimes people leave a marriage emotionally and in every other way before they actually leave Physically

1) The Christian is in bondage – horrible situation where they feel trapped

C) Example: I counseled a lady once who's husband was not a Christian – he didn't spend time with her – appreciate her

1) If would often leave for weeks at a time with this biker gang that he hung with that included – prostitutes

D) He would leave and not tell her where he was – where he was going – road trip with the gang – gone weeks – show back up

1) I think he knew enough of the Bible – he would always claim – I have cheated on you.

E) Here is what he had in his wife – Great lady – who kept his house clean did his laundry – cooked for him – and had sex when he wanted

1) He had a house keeper with sexual benefits basically

This lady came to me – saying I don't know what do to – He says he hasn't committed adultery.

A) First thing I told her was go get tested for an STD – stop sleeping with him until you get the test back – let me talk to him

B) I talked to him and he verified what she was telling me – I told her –

1) he left your marriage in every other way – but permanently physically

C) And everything he is doing is and who he is hanging with is an indication that he probably has cheated on you –

1) You are free to leave that marriage – file for divorce – which she did

Here is another scenario that is evidence of a Departure that isn't physical. (hasn't physically left yet)

A) We have counseled women who have been in abusive relationships with someone who claimed to be a Christian.

B) When there is Physical Abuse – listen – you are free to leave –

C) And if your spouse believer or not – refuses to get help – you are free to divorce –

1) **God has called you to peace – no peace in that**

D) God does not call you to be a punching bag –

1) a person who is treating you like that has departed from the marriage Covenant even if still physically residing under the same roof

E) And they are acting like an unbeliever -

⁷ And these things command, that they may be blameless. ⁸ But if anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever. 1 Timothy 5:7-8.

What about verbal abuse - I want to be careful here -- not talking – “my husband yelled at me today”

A) I am Bailing – happens often- Some people will look for any way possible to get out of their marriage

B) But in those situations where the verbal abuse is constant – degrading – vulgar – has been going on for a long time and escalating

C) Usually in those type of scenarios the Husband is very controlling and manipulative – He will rage and then – say I am sorry

1) Buy gifts - only to blow up again a day or two later

D) And whether it is intentional or unintentional – a pattern is formed that leaves the Christian spouse – usually the wife – feeling beat down

1) Afraid – frustrated – and somehow because of the manipulation it leaves her feeling like this is all her fault.

E) If she was just _____ he would act like this.

And even though that guy might claim to be a Christian – he is surely not acting like a Christian – (and it is my opinion – shared by many pastors)

A) The Christian spouse who is enduring that type of constant torment is not called by the Lord to stay in that situation

B) The abusive spouse though – professing to be a Christian is not acting like a Christian

C) And although they haven't physically left the house – they have left in every other way.

1) I personally believe the Lord doesn't call a woman to have to wait until the Husband gets to the point – abuse becomes physical

D) You start to feel that situation is unsafe for you and your kids, if your husband will not leave -

1) if he refuses counsel - You leave – and we will help you get into a safe environment.

E) Sometimes it takes a person leaving – to get that rebellious spouse to finally come to their senses and wake up

In closing- let me just emphasize again – the Lord's heart being communicated to the Christian spouse

A) Unbelieving Spouse – Don't seek to get out of the relationship – hang in there because -

16 For how do you know, O wife, whether you will save your husband? Or how do you know, O husband, whether you will save your wife?

B) That is God's ultimate desire is to use the believing spouse and or kids to get the unbeliever to come to faith in Jesus

C) My story with my dad -