

A Comprehensive Study Of 1 Corinthians Chapter 7

By Robert Waters

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Author's comments about this workbook:

This study material is presented by the author with full confidence that it is sound teaching. The author has spent much of his life fully committed to learning the truth about divorce and remarriage—having engaged numerous skilful opponents in formal debate and exchanges. He is now devoted to teaching the truth he has learned and prays the reader will give it a fair hearing. The author believes Paul's teaching in 1 Corinthians 7 has answers that many have failed to comprehend. Use this material as you wish in studying, learning, preaching, teaching and writing. But if you share, please do so only by providing the link from the author's web site. <http://www.totalhealth.bz/1Corinthians7.pdf>

Our Objectives in studying this chapter are:

- 1) To understand that fornication, as seen in the previous chapter (6:9-20), was an enormous problem among the Corinthians, which explain why much of chapter 7 is designed to help Christians deal with the problem.
- 2) To learn what Paul taught the Christians at Corinth who asked questions about marriage.
- 3) To harmonize Paul's teaching with Jesus' teaching.

Introduction

Seeing that the gist of Paul's teaching, and some other very clear statements in the Bible as well, contradict what many believe Jesus taught, it becomes necessary that certain false notions be put away. Before this can happen students must put into practice good hermeneutics.

Hermeneutics: The theory and methodology of interpretation, especially of scriptural text.

Recommended Resources:

<http://www.free-bible-study-lessons.net/bible-interpretation.html>

<http://www.totalhealth.bz/marriage-divorce-remarriage-hermeneutics.htm>

<http://www.totalhealth.bz/divorce-and-remarriage-exception-clause.htm>

Good hermeneutics involve the use of various rules for Bible study that are logical and reasonable and reflect “good old common-sense.”

Due to failure to use good hermeneutics, even the best commentators miss important truth that is clearly revealed in this chapter. Some important study rules are overlooked or disregarded. For instance, commentators already have their minds made up as to what Jesus taught and thus they explain the texts in the chapter, as best they can, to harmonize with their preconceived ideas. Paul’s teaching in this chapter is so clear one would need help to misunderstand, and that is exactly what happens: commentators get help from other commentators, going back more than 1,000 years to the Roman Catholic Church, which thinks the church regulates marriage and that divorce is never an option. This is the root of the concept that one divorced is “still married in God’s eyes.”

This chapter is impossible to harmonize with the traditional view that Jesus changed the Law that allowed women to “go be another man’s wife” (Deut. 24:1, 2). For some, this means that truth will never come to light until they are willing to change their view and give up their previous belief and practice.

It is generally observed and noted by commentators that Paul spoke to **four** groups of people: (1) widows; (2) the unmarried; (3) those married to believers; and (4) those married to unbelievers.

However, a **fifth** group of people was addressed: **those who were asking the questions**. Paul spoke to each group with guidance, specific duties, responsibilities and/or restrictions. Preachers, elders and teachers are all in the **fifth category** no matter what their marital status is. Yet, this group often seems to be concerned only with imposing their idea of what Jesus taught on others while totally ignoring directives from Paul that are applicable to them. For example, “let them marry” is disregarded because it contradicts their preconceived idea that the divorced cannot marry lest they commit adultery.

The first verse of the chapter actually addresses people who were asking the questions. This is an important observation because those who sought answers in Paul’s day **needed to apply the teaching to themselves**, just as do people today. One should ask “Is what I have believed and practiced contrary to Paul’s directive?” The idea that divorced persons are ineligible for marriage, and therefore must be forbidden to marry, is a notion that the apostle expelled in no uncertain terms in various passages in the chapter, and in his letter to Timothy (1 Tim. 4:1-3).

Before beginning a verse by verse study of chapter 7 we should first take notice of what Paul said in the previous chapter (verses 9-20). His words here set the stage

for his response to the letter he had received from the Corinthians, a letter that obviously contained questions regarding marriage. We see in chapter 6 that Paul was faced with a crisis; he had to deal with a huge problem in the church at Corinth—the problem of fornication or sexual relations outside of marriage. The verses noted above should be read and considered before beginning this study of chapter 7, in which Paul gives instructions as to how to overcome the problem he had just been discussing. Everywhere in chapter 7, Paul’s advice and commands are for the good of those who would seek to overcome the problems noted in chapter 6. NOTHING in the chapter even hints at the idea that God would have his people punished with celibacy because they are divorced. To the contrary! The solution, the means of avoiding fornication, was/is to marry! This teaching was given not only to those in Corinth who needed it (and also those who need it today) but also to those who might be inclined to teach otherwise.

Summary/Outline of the Chapter (From Clark Commentary)

Clark: 1 Corinthians 7 –

“A solution of several difficult cases concerning marriage and married persons, [1Co 7:1-6](#).”

God has given every man his proper gift, [1Co 7:7](#).

Directions to the unmarried and widows, [1Co 7:8](#), [1Co 7:9](#).

Directions to the married, [1Co 7:10](#), [1Co 7:11](#).

Directions to men married to heathen women, and to women married to heathen men, [1Co 7:12-16](#).

Every man should abide in his vocation, [1Co 7:17-24](#).

Directions concerning virgins, and single persons in general, [1Co 7:25-28](#).

How all should behave themselves in the things of this life, in reference to eternity, [1Co 7:29-31](#).

The trials of the married state, [1Co 7:32-35](#).

Directions concerning the state of virginity or celibacy, [1Co 7:36-38](#).

How the wife is bound to her husband during his life, and her liberty to marry another after his death, [1Co 7:39](#), [1Co 7:40](#).”

Verse by Verse Study with Discussion Questions and Comments (Passages are from the KJV unless otherwise noted):

A solution of several difficult cases concerning marriage and married persons (1-6):

7:1 Now I will answer the questions that you asked in your letter. You asked, "Is it best for people not to marry?" (CEV)

1. Did Paul respond to a letter that was written to him from the Corinthians?

Yes, various false teachings were of concern.

2. What was the main substance of the letter?

The brethren had asked questions of the apostle, who was qualified to answer them as spokesman for God. It is worthy of note that since this was teaching directed to "us" as opposed to teaching directed to Jewish men who were mistreating their wives, we should give it an honest examination rather than succumb to the temptation to endeavour to force passages to harmonize with some preconceived idea. The course many take is to ignore certain passages altogether. This was typical and characteristic of the Jews who closed their eyes and stopped their ears (Acts 28:27). This attitude, that "I'm going to believe what I want to," may be motivated by peer pressure or just the driving force to follow tradition. It is nurtured and fertilized with the praise and honour of peers, and can result in the worst thing that can happen to a disciple of Christ: to become blinded to truth.

2 Thes. 2:10 And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. 11 And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: 12 That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.

3. Can we determine what the brethren were inquiring about?

We do not have the actual questions. We can only surmise what might have been asked based upon the answers—something like the popular game show called *Jeopardy*, where the answer is given and the participant presents the question.

4. Would the question “**Who may marry?**” likely be one of the chief questions of concern asked of Paul in this chapter?

Yes.

5. What things come to mind as being important when studying this chapter?

- a. That questions had been asked by Christians;
- b. That Christians were being addressed;
- c. That the question “Who may marry?” was answered by a spokesman for God; and
- d. That the people who heard Paul’s answers are likewise addressed and expected to follow his instructions.

6. Why is it important that we understand the truth taught in this chapter that pertains to the question “Who may marry?”

- a. So we can have the scriptures in harmony and enjoy knowing that we believe and practice the truth.
- b. Because of the ramifications or consequences of being wrong, which include:
 - 1) Needlessly breaking up marriages and families;
 - 2) Imposing celibacy on people who need marriage;
 - 3) Ostracizing preachers who are teaching the truth;
 - 4) Refusing fellowship with brethren who differ with us;
 - 5) Causing people to leave the church;
 - 6) Causing people who hear the gospel to reject Christ, although they are not guilty of adultery, but only doing something contrary to tradition.

7. If a man is presented with a theory regarding “Who may marry?” that has serious hermeneutical problems, what should he do?

Re-evaluate his position to determine if there is a better explanation that actually harmonizes with Paul’s clear teachings.

8. What are some hermeneutical problems with the idea that Jesus taught that a divorced person will commit adultery if he/she remarries?

- a. This teaching has Jesus contradicting Moses, who taught that a divorced woman “may go be another man’s wife” (Deut. 24:1, 2).
- b. It has Jesus breaking his promise not to change the Law before the cross (Matt. 5:17).
- c. The Greek word “apoluo” is assumed to mean divorce when there is no basis for such an understanding, other than the teaching of men.
- d. Matthew 19:9 is an obscure teaching as compared to the clear teachings of Paul, thus the latter should not be forced to harmonize with the former.
- e. It has Christians teaching an unjust doctrine (punishing even innocent persons by denying marriage while asserting that such is what Jesus taught).

9. Was Paul inspired of God in giving his answers to questions asked him pertaining to “who may marry”? Please provide scripture for your answer.

Yes.

1 Cor. 14:37 “If any man think himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord.”

10. Do preachers commonly present Paul’s teachings when they attempt to teach about divorce and marriage?

No.

They present the traditional view of Jesus’ teachings, often using a translation that improperly translates a key word, and they do not bring up the chapter where Paul deals with questions Christians asked pertaining to the subject.

11. What teaching, or scripture, do most preachers refer to when teaching what they think about who has a right to marriage?

Matthew 19:9 And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery.

12. What if their interpretation of what Jesus said has serious hermeneutical problems?

Then their basis for their teaching is false and they are teaching a doctrine that is false.

13. What was divorce intended to do, and what was the probable reason for making it available? Where do we find the passage that was the focal point of the discussion Jesus had with Jewish men?

- a. Originally, it was so the wife of a Jewish male who no longer wanted her could “go be another man’s wife” rather than be on her own, often with no skills for making a living.
- b. Divorce basically and fundamentally ended the marriage.
- c. Deut. 24.

14. How many passages of scriptures are there where the apostle Paul alludes to a particular **reason** or **cause** for a divorce necessary to consider the divorce as scriptural or freeing, “in God’s eyes,” the one doing the divorcing?

ZERO.

Note: It is commonly taught that when a divorce takes place only the one who initiated the divorce is free while the other is still married or “bound.” This idea actually promotes divorce as it encourages a race to the court house instead of endeavouring to work things out.

15. What were the two schools of thought regarding the teaching of the passage in question?

Wikipedia: “**Divorce**. The House of Shammai held that a man may only divorce his wife for a serious transgression, but the House of Hillel allowed divorce for even trivial offenses, such as burning a meal.”

16. Were the Jews seeking to get Jesus to take sides, and if so, what were they hoping to accomplish? Did Jesus take sides?

- a. Yes.
- b. They were hoping to cause him problems.
- c. No, he directed them to how it was in the beginning—God’s directive to “let not man put asunder.” Thus, they were both wrong. While it is true that God gave the divorce law for the benefit of the woman, this was in no way a justification for the evil practices of the men who continued to mistreat their wives up to Jesus’ day, and are continuing to do so even today.

17. If Jesus had actually taught something that flatly contradicted Moses’ teaching regarding marriage, what would have been the Jews’ course of action and why? What was their course of action, and why?

- a. They would have had reason to kill him and would have used it at the trial by the Sanhedrin.
- b. They took no action nor made any charge that Jesus was teaching contrary to Moses.
- c. Their lack of action was evidently due to the fact that Jesus did not teach contrary to Moses, which means Jesus did not say what “friends” of Jesus today say he said.

18. Where is divorce defined in the Bible and how is it defined?

- a. An action taken by a man that involves writing a bill of divorcement, putting it into his wife’s hand, and sending her out of the house.
- b. Deut. 24:1, 2.

19. Was Deut. 24:1-2 a command for the men to follow if they sought to end a marriage? What did Jesus say regarding this (Mark 10:3)?

- a. Yes.
- b. “What did Moses command you?”

20. How is divorce defined in our culture?

The same way as it was defined by Moses, in a legal sense.

Preachers, in an effort to defend their contention that *apoluo*, translated “put away,” means divorce, sometimes define divorce as a separation. But even a “legal separation” is not a divorce. A separation just means the couple are not currently living together and are not free to act as if not married.

21. What example do we have in the Old Testament that indicates that God approved of Moses’ teaching regarding divorce? Where is this passage found?

- a. God’s own divorce.
- b. Jeremiah 3:8, 14.

22. Where in the New Testament do we find the definition of divorce?

Not found.

23. Is God’s definition of divorce applicable to all people? Discuss your reasoning for your answer.

Yes, because he is wise and knows what is best for people. He recognizes that some marriages will not work and that the need for a marriage continues, especially among the young, and that without it fornication will likely be committed.

24. What is the Greek word that is translated “put away” in Matthew 19:9 in the KJV? Approximately how many times is this word used? What are some common everyday usages?

Apoluo.

Thayer's Greek Lexicon:

apoluō

1) to set free

2) to let go, dismiss, (to detain no longer)

2a) a petitioner to whom liberty to depart is given by a decisive answer

2b) to bid depart, send away

3) to let go free, release

3a) a captive, i.e. to loose his bonds and bid him depart, to give him liberty to depart

3b) to acquit one accused of a crime and set him at liberty

3c) indulgently to grant a prisoner leave to depart

3d) to release a debtor, i.e. not to press one's claim against him, to remit his debt
4) used of divorce, to dismiss from the house, to repudiate. The wife of a Greek or Roman may divorce her husband.

5) to send one's self away, to depart

Part of Speech: verb

Usage:

This word is used 70 times:

Passages below are passages where the word "apoluo" is used:

[Matthew 1:19:](#)

"willing to make her a public example, was minded to put her away privily."

[Matthew 5:31:](#)

"It hath been said, Whosoever shall put away his wife, let him give"

[Matthew 5:32:](#)

"unto you, That whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for"

[Matthew 5:32:](#)

"to commit adultery: and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced committeth adultery."

[Matthew 14:15:](#)

"time is now past; send the multitude away, that they may go"

[Matthew 14:22:](#)

"the other side, while he sent the multitudes away."

[Matthew 14:23:](#)

"And when he had sent the multitudes away, he went up into a mountain apart"

[Matthew 15:23:](#)

"and besought him, saying, Send her away; for she crieth after"

[Matthew 15:32:](#)

"to eat: and I will not send them away fasting, lest"

[Matthew 15:39:](#)

"And he sent away the multitude, and took ship, and"

[Matthew 18:27](#):

"of that servant was moved with compassion and loosed him, and forgave him"

[Matthew 19:3](#):

"unto him, Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for"

[Matthew 19:7](#):

"a writing of divorcement, and to put her away"

[Matthew 19:8](#):

"hardness of your hearts suffered you to put away your wives: but"

[Matthew 19:9](#):

"I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except"

[Matthew 19:9](#):

"another, committeth adultery: and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery."

[Matthew 27:15](#):

"the governor was wont to release unto the people a prisoner,"

[Matthew 27:17](#):

"unto them, Whom will ye that I release unto you? Barabbas, or Jesus"

[Matthew 27:21](#):

"the twain will ye that I release unto you? They said,"

[Matthew 27:26](#):

"Then released he Barabbas unto them: and when he had scourged Jesus, he delivered"

[Mark 6:36](#):

"Send them away, that they may go into the country round about,"

[Mark 6:45](#):

"to go to the other side before unto Bethsaida, while he sent away the people."

[Mark 8:3](#):

"And if I send them away fasting to their own houses,"

[Mark 8:9:](#)

"about four thousand: and he sent them away."

[Mark 10:2:](#)

"Is it lawful for a man to put away *his* wife? tempting him."

[Mark 10:4:](#)

"a bill of divorcement, and to put *her* away"

[Mark 10:11:](#)

"he saith unto them, Whosoever shall put away his wife, and"

[Mark 10:12:](#)

"And if a woman shall put away her husband, and be married"

[Mark 15:6:](#)

"Now at *that* feast he released unto them one prisoner, whomsoever"

[Mark 15:9:](#)

"them, saying, Will ye that I release unto you the King of the"

[Mark 15:11:](#)

"people, that he should rather release Barabbas unto them."

[Mark 15:15:](#)

"to content the people, released Barabbas unto them, and"

[Luke 2:29:](#)

"now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy"

[Luke 6:37:](#)

"and ye shall not be condemned: forgive, and ye shall be forgiven:"

[Luke 6:37:](#)

"be condemned: forgive, and ye shall be forgiven:"

[Luke 8:38:](#)

"him: but Jesus sent him away, saying,"

[Luke 9:12:](#)

"twelve, and said unto him, Send the multitude away, that they may go"

[Luke 13:12](#):

"said unto her, Woman, thou art loosed from thine infirmity."

[Luke 14:4](#):

"*him*, and healed him, and let him go;"

[Luke 16:18](#):

"Whosoever putteth away his wife, and marrieth another, committeth adultery:"

[Luke 16:18](#): "and whosoever marrieth her that is put away from *her* husband committeth adultery."

[Luke 22:68](#):

"answer me, nor let *me* go."

[Luke 23:16](#):

"I will therefore chastise him, and release"

[Luke 23:17](#):

"(For of necessity he must release one unto them at the feast.)"

[Luke 23:18](#):

"Away with this *man*, and release unto us Barabbas:"

[Luke 23:20](#):

"Pilate therefore, willing to release Jesus, spake again to them."

[Luke 23:22](#):

"chastise him, and let *him* go."

[Luke 23:25](#):

"And he released unto them him that for sedition and murder was cast"

[John 18:39](#):

"have a custom, that I should release unto you one at the"

[John 18:39](#):

"passover: will ye therefore that I release unto you the King of the"

[John 19:10](#):

"and have power to release thee?"

[John 19:10:](#)

"and have power to release thee?"

[John 19:12:](#)

"thenceforth Pilate sought to release him: but the Jews"

[John 19:12:](#)

"cried out, saying, If thou let this man go, thou art not Caesar's"

[Acts 3:13:](#)

"in the presence of Pilate, when he was determined to let *him* go."

[Acts 4:21:](#)

"So when they had further threatened them, they let them go, finding nothing how"

[Acts 4:23:](#)

"And being let go, they went to their own company, and reported all that"

[Acts 5:40:](#)

"name of Jesus, and let them go."

[Acts 13:3:](#)

"laid *their* hands on them, they sent *them* away."

[Acts 15:30:](#)

"So when they were dismissed, they came to Antioch: and"

[Acts 15:33:](#)

"And after they had tarried *there* a space, they were let go in peace from the"

[Acts 16:35:](#)

"the sergeants, saying, Let those men go."

[Acts 16:36:](#)

"magistrates have sent to let you go: now therefore depart, and go"

[Acts 17:9:](#)

"and of the other, they let them go."

[Acts 19:41:](#)

"And when he had thus spoken, he dismissed the assembly."

[Acts 23:22:](#)

"the chief captain *then* let the young man depart, and charged *him*, See *thou* tell"

[Acts 26:32:](#)

"This man might have been set at liberty, if he had not appealed unto Caesar."

[Acts 28:18:](#)

"when they had examined me, would have let *me* go, because there was no cause of death"

[Acts 28:25:](#)

"when they agreed not among themselves, they departed, after that Paul had spoken one"

[Hebrews 13:23:](#)

"Know ye that *our* brother Timothy is set at liberty; with whom, if he come"

A man might say he had his wife "put away" when he was talking about putting her in an insane asylum. Or, one might have been shacking up with a woman and tell a friend, "I sent her on her way."

25. Can a word be misused to the point that it becomes defined differently from how it was intended? If "apoluo" is properly defined as "put away" and a putting away or sending away can be accomplished without a certificate of divorce, is the act of "putting away" a legal and binding action according to the command in Deut. 24:1, 2?

a. Yes.

b. No. If one can put away without a certificate of divorce then it follows that "put away" is not divorce.

26. Approximately how many times is the Greek word "apoluo" translated "divorce" in the American Standard Version?

Zero.

27. How do we determine the meaning of words?

Generally by looking them up, but scholars must verify that they are correct by giving sound reasons for their definition. How a word is used in context is crucial. Thus, one must understand the context.

28. Should we allow men who purport to be scholars to determine what we believe on any subject? What passage states that we should not think of men above that which is written?

- a. No.
- b. 1 Cor. 4:6.

29. Where did the idea that marriage is a sacrament and that divorce does not end a marriage originate? What scripture can you provide that supports your answer?

- a. Roman Catholicism.
- b. 1 Tim. 4:1-3.

30. What is the English word for what happens when a couple part ways indefinitely but are not divorced?

Separation.

31. In view of the definition of divorce given in Deut. 24:1, 2, and confirmed in Jer. 3:8, is a separation a divorce?

No.

32. Under the Old Testament, what sin would be committed if a man sent his wife away indefinitely with the idea of never giving her a bill of divorcement? Give the scripture that clarifies specifically what the sin is. Can man commit the same sin today?

- a. "Adultery against her."
- b. Mark 10:11.
- c. Yes, Jews are still doing it and anyone can do it where the woman is not given the right to initiate a divorce.

33. If a man can commit adultery against a woman by sending her away but not divorcing her, is it not probable that Jesus would have dealt with it? Where did he deal with it if it was not in the texts where Jesus is accused of changing the Law that allowed the woman to “go be another man’s wife”?

Yes.

34. What logical reason can we give for why the woman a man *APOLUO*ed would be guilty of adultery if she was merely sent away and not given the bill of divorce?

She was not legally divorced and thus would have no moral or legal right to be with another man.

35. Is it a known fact that the Jewish men in Jesus’ day were allowed to have more than one wife? Did Jesus teach that they were committing adultery by having more than one wife?

a. Yes.

b. No.

36. Is it hermeneutically sound for people to apply the idea that a man commits adultery if he *APOLUO*s his wife and marries another when the teaching used to justify it applied only to the woman?

No.

37. Since according to history, during the time of Christ, the woman brought a dowry to the marriage that would have to be returned if the man divorced her, how could the man get the dowry for himself?

Early in Old Testament times the men paid the dowry to the woman’s father, but by the time of Christ that custom was changed and the woman paid the dowry. (See: <http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/5297-dowry>.)

38. In view of the fact that by merely putting away and not divorcing a man could keep the dowry, is it apparent that there was MOTIVE for such action? Does this help support the idea that Jewish men were actually guilty of this deed, which some deny? Is it reasonable that Jesus would not deal with this treacherous act against the wife (Mark 10:11)? If he did deal with it, which texts would we think were applicable?

- a. Yes.
- b. Yes.
- c. No.
- d. Matt. 19:9 and other passages where it has been assumed that Jesus was speaking of divorce, rather than sending away without the Bill of Divorce that would allow the woman “to go be another man’s wife.”

39. When a man in Jesus’ day sent his wife out permanently (but did not divorce) and married another, how was that “adultery against her”?

It was a treacherous act of covenant breaking that put her on the street unable to care for herself, and would result in her committing adultery if she took up with another man (Mal. 2:16). He robbed her of her dowry and made it impossible for her to carry out her duty as wife. His action was actually a much greater sin against a woman than divorcing a faithful wife.

40. Why would the woman be happy to receive a certificate of divorce from a man who kicked her out of the house?

It was the legal papers she needed to prove she was free and could marry. It would mean she would no longer be on her own but would now have someone to take care for her. She would now, if she could find another man, not be tempted to a life of prostitution to make a living.

41. In view of the idea that Jesus was speaking of men’s putting away their wives and not divorcing, explain what the “exception clause” pertained to?

The man would not be guilty of “adultery against her” if he learned the marriage was illegal and sent her away but did not divorce. There would be no need for a divorce. The only thing called for would be to end the relationship, described by the word “apoluo.”

42. Give two examples in the New Testament of incestuous marriages and present the passages.

Herod and Herodias (Herodias had married Herod, apparently his brother's ex, while the brother was still living [see Lev. 20:21]), Matt. 14:4; man who had his father's wife, 1 Cor. 5:1.

43. If a man becomes a Christian and finds that he is in a marriage that is incestuous, or otherwise illegal, if he ends the relationship according to the meaning of "apoluo," and marries another, would he be guilty of adultery? Would the woman be guilty of adultery if she married another?

a. No.

b. No.

7:2 Nevertheless, to avoid fornication, let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband.

1. What reason did Paul give for commanding to let people have a spouse?

That they might "avoid fornication."

2. Does Paul qualify in any way who was to be allowed to marry?

Not in this text, but the female must have reached the "flower of her age" and the male must be a "man." (See verse 36.)

3. Does the leadership of a church obey this command if they make the charge of adultery against one who has been divorced and has married again?

No.

4. Into what category did Paul place the sin of "forbidding to marry"? Where is this passage found?

a. "Doctrines of demons."

b. 1 Tim. 4:1-3.

5. If a church today practices the same thing as the Roman Catholic Church in principle, is it guilty of the same sin?

Yes.

Catholics not only forbid their priests to have a marriage, but they also do not recognize divorce. These teachings and practices are evidently what Paul had in mind when he gave the prophecy about “forbidding to marry” and classified it into the category of “doctrines of devils” (1 Tim. 4:1-3).

7:3-5 A man should fulfill his duty as a husband, and a woman should fulfill her duty as a wife, and each should satisfy the other's needs. 4 A wife is not the master of her own body, but her husband is; in the same way a husband is not the master of his own body, but his wife is. 5 Do not deny yourselves to each other, unless you first agree to do so for a while in order to spend your time in prayer; but then resume normal marital relations. In this way you will be kept from giving in to Satan's temptation because of your lack of self-control. (GNB)

What is stressed as important in verses 3-5?

Barnes' Comments: “Let them not imagine that there is any virtue in being separate from each other, as if they were in a state of celibacy” - “Doddridge.” They are bound to each other; in every way they are to evince kindness, and to seek to promote the happiness and purity of each other. (snip) “...He reminds them of the sacredness of their vow, and of the fact that in person, property, and in every respect, they belong to each other. It was necessary to give this direction, for the contrary might have been regarded as proper by many who would have supposed there was special virtue and merit in living separate from each other; as facts have shown that many have imbibed such an idea - and it was not possible to give the rule with more delicacy than Paul has done.”

7:6 But I speak this by permission, *and* not of commandment.

When Paul said he spoke by *permission and not of commandment* was he referring to what he had previously said or what he was about to say?

Commentators are not in agreement, but it seems more probable, due to the fact that he used himself as a personal example and gave his opinion, that he was referring to what he was about to say.

God has given every man his proper gift (7):

7:7 For I would that all men were even as I myself. But every man hath his proper gift of God, one after this manner, and another after that.

1. What did Paul mean when he said “I would that all men were even as I myself”?

Barnes: That all men. - That Paul was unmarried is evident from [1Co 9:5](#). But he does not refer to this fact here. When he wishes that all people were like himself, he evidently does not intend that he would prefer that all should be unmarried, for this would be against the divine institution, and against his own precepts elsewhere. But he would be glad if all people had control over their passions and propensities as he had; had the gift of continence, and could abstain from marriage when circumstances of trial, etc., would make it proper. We may add, that when Paul wishes to exhort to anything that is difficult, he usually adduces “his own example” to show that “it may be done;” an example which it would be well for all ministers to be able to follow.

2. Why do you suppose Paul spoke of the “**gift of God**” in the context of marriage?

Because some CAN resist temptation and live moral lives without marriage, but some CANNOT. Thus, marriage should not be denied.

3. If someone does not have the “gift of God,” and would therefore have great difficulty living celibate, and the church tells him that marriage is not an option, what “tool” of God has been taken from him that he could have used to help him avoid fornication?

Marriage.

Directions to the unmarried and widows (8-9):

7:8 I say therefore to the unmarried and widows, It is good for them if they abide even as I.

1. To whom did Paul address the statement above?

The unmarried AND widows: two categories of single people.

2. Are divorced people “unmarried”?

Yes, by definition.

7:9 However, if they cannot control themselves, they should get married, for it is better to marry than to burn with passion. (ISV)

1. What does “cannot contain” mean?

Cannot resist the temptation of the flesh with his betrothed or fiancée.

2. Was Paul talking about the divorced when he said to “let them marry”?

Yes.

3. If divorced people cannot contain and need marriage to “avoid fornication,” what does Paul instruct others to do?

Let them marry.

4. Why might it be better for someone to marry, even during times of persecution (“the present distress”)?

“Better to marry than to burn with passion.”

5. If someone insists that verses 8 and 9 are speaking of virgins, or those who have never married, what objection could be offered?

The context does not support this assumption. Paul was not addressing virgins at this point but was addressing the “unmarried”--those who had been “loosed” from the marriage, whether by divorce or death. (See also verses 27, 28.)

Directions to the married (10-11):

7:10 And unto the married I command, *yeſt* not I, but the Lord, Let not the wife depart from *her* husband: 11 But and if she depart, let her remain unmarried, or be reconciled to *her* husband: and let not the husband put away *his* wife.

1. Whom is addressed in verse 10: a) the married wife; b) those asking the questions; c) the divorced.

A and b.

2. Whom is NOT addressed in this passage?

Those who are SINGLE, which includes the divorced whom Paul already addressed; and to this group he said nothing about a necessity to remain “unmarried,” but to the contrary: “let them marry.”

Thus, to insist that Paul forbade marriage for those who have been divorced is to take the passage out of context. Furthermore, it has Paul teaching something contrary to everything he said pertaining to marriage.

3. What is the meaning of the Greek word translated “depart”?

“**Chōrizō**” means: *to place room between, that is, part; reflexively to go away: - depart, put asunder, separate. (Strong)*

4. What other words are used by various translations instead of “depart” in verse 10?

Leave, separate (ESV, AMP), go away (BBE).

The majority of versions use either the word “leave” or “separate.”

5. How many versions can you find that translate “chorizo” as “divorce” instead of one of the words above?

The author of this workbook has looked at numerous versions and has yet to find one that translates “chorizo” as divorce.

6. Since both the **wording** and the **context** indicate that Paul was giving instruction to the **married** rather than the **divorced**, are we using good hermeneutics if we assert that the text teaches that a divorced person must remain celibate?

No.

7. If Jesus had taught that a divorce does not end the marriage except when it is for adultery, what of the fact that Paul did not mention a “cause” or “exception” here, or anywhere? Which one of the following would best answer the above question?

- a. Paul did not feel the need to harmonize his teaching with Jesus’ teaching.
- b. Paul was wrong to leave out the “exception” whereby one who divorced could marry another.
- c. Paul expected that his hearers would know what Jesus taught.
- d. Paul taught the entire truth, as one with authority to answer the questions in full, and the fact that he did not mention an exception is strong evidence that he was not inspired to speak of a “reason” or exception.
- e. Paul was dealing only with a couple that separated, rather than with a divorced couple; therefore, his words here are not applicable to those who have actually divorced, particularly if they have married another.

The answer to the above question is “e.”

This passage is often construed in a way intended to support the traditional teaching that Jesus taught that the divorced commit adultery when they marry again. Ordinarily, Paul’s teachings are ignored altogether; but when the traditional teaching began to get hammered with the truth Paul taught in verses 8-9 and other places, someone with influence decided verse 11 was supportive of his own view. The contention is that the word “agamos,” translated “unmarried” in the KJV, implies the couple is divorced. Those who insist upon this go from there and further insist that Paul was saying the divorced must remain celibate. But due to the fact that the instruction was to reconcile or “make up with her husband” (see NCV below) rather than marry again, it seems apparent that this passage is used out of desperation.

The version below is one of a few that, in my view, more accurately translate the passage:

But, if indeed she is separated, let her remain so, or be reconciled to her basherter; and a ba'al should not leave his isha. [Orthodox Jewish Bible (OJB)]

But if she does leave him, she must remain unmarried or else be reconciled to her husband. Likewise, a husband must not abandon his wife. (ISV)

But if she does leave, she must not marry again, or she should make up with her husband. Also the husband should not divorce his wife. [New Century Version (NCV)]

8. When Paul gave his judgment that a widow should not marry, how did he describe her state or condition?

“As she is.”

Paul had previously addressed the “unmarried” (divorced); here he was concerned with the married and gave instruction as to the matter of abandonment or separation. Thus, the text is not even applicable to the divorced. Paul gave the command to the wife not to depart, but recognized that some would do so even under the then-present distress or persecution. In such case he said that if the wife departed or separated herself she was not free to marry another. This was along the same line of Jesus’ teachings—that a separated woman would be guilty of adultery if she married another. She was to remain as she was (separated).

Even though many scholars misunderstand Jesus’ teaching regarding his use of the word “apoluo,” they understand this text and the use of the word “chorizo.”

Below are quotes from various popular commentators:

Pulpit Commentary: The reference throughout the verse is to separation due to incompatibility of temper, etc.; not to legal divorce.

Robertson's Word Pictures: "But and if she depart....If, in spite of Christ's clear prohibition, she get separated...."

Bloomfield [The Greek New Testament]: “From the use of καταλλ [reconcile] and the air of the context it is plain that the apostle is not speaking of formal divorces, affected by law, but separations whether agreed on or not, arising from misunderstandings or otherwise.”

JFB: But and if she depart — or ‘be separated.’ If the sin of separation has been committed, that of a new marriage is not to be added. (Mt 5:32)

9. Which of the following best represents what would reasonably be considered the gist of Paul’s teaching regarding marriage?

- a. If one has been divorced church leaders must make sure he was the one who initiated the divorce for adultery.
- b. Divorced persons have forfeited their right to marriage and can, if they try, live a life of celibacy.
- c. Couples that are separated should remain as they are, rather than marry another, or they should reconcile. The instructions regarding the “unmarried” are to “let them marry.”

Answer: c.

Consider the trouble Catholic priests have gotten into due to that church’s sin of “forbidding to marry” as applied to their clergy.

Directions to men married to heathen women, and to women married to heathen men (12-16):

7:12-13 But to the rest speak I, not the Lord: If any brother hath a wife that believeth not, and she be pleased to dwell with him, let him not put her away. 13 And the woman which hath an husband that believeth not, and if he be pleased to dwell with her, let her not leave him.

1. Who are the “rest” of which Paul spoke?

In previous passages, didn’t Paul deal with issues pertaining to **Christians who were married to Christians**, and to those who were “**unmarried**,” which would include the divorced and the widowed? Thus, it would seem logical that the “**rest**” would be those who were not in the categories of those already addressed.

2. What reason did Paul give for a man’s not putting away his unbelieving wife?

“If she be pleased to dwell with him.”

3. What was different in Paul's answer about the responsibility of the woman married to the unbelieving husband?

The man could put away or leave, but the woman would need to be the one leaving (as she could not put away her husband).

4. Does this passage indicate that women in Corinth did not have the same rights as the men?

Yes.

7:14 For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband: else were your children unclean; but now are they holy.

1. Which of the following is correct?

- a. The unbelieving spouse is made holy by the believing spouse.
- b. The unbelieving husband was sanctified "in regard to the subject under discussion;" that is, in regard to the question whether it was proper for them to live together, or whether they should be separated or not. And the sense may be, "They are by the marriage tie one flesh" (**Barnes**).

Answer: b.

7:15 But if the unbelieving depart, let him depart. A brother or a sister is not under bondage in such cases: but God hath called us to peace.

If a Christian's unbelieving spouse does not want to continue the marriage Paul said the Christian must not let go because the bondage still exists and only the person initiating the divorce for adultery may marry again. True or False?

False.

Foy Wallace Jr.:

Verses 15-16, in the case of the abandonment of the believer by the unbeliever, whereby the believer is "not under bondage" and is therefore set free. If the bondage here does not refer to the marriage bond, then the believer would still be in the bondage of it. To advocate, as some do, that the passage means the believer is not bound to live or remain with the departing unbeliever would be a truism, for it is set forth as a case of abandonment and the abandoned one obviously could not abide with the one who had departed. It appears evident that when the unbeliever so departs it presupposes a state of adultery which exists in the principle previously discussed, and here the apostle's inspired teaching is again projected beyond the Lord's own strictures and declares the abandoned believer "not under bondage." If that does not mean that the believer in these circumstances is free to marry, then it cannot mean anything, for if the one involved is not altogether free the bondage would still exist" (**The Sermon on the Mount and the Civil State**, p. 45).

7:16 For what knowest thou, O wife, whether thou shalt save *thy* husband? or how knowest thou, O man, whether thou shalt save *thy* wife?

What reason did Paul give for the believing spouse to be willing to stay with the unbelieving spouse?

Answer: Possible conversion.

Every man should abide in his vocation (17-24):

7:17 But as God hath distributed to every man, as the Lord hath called every one, so let him walk. And so ordain I in all churches. 18 Is any man called being circumcised? let him not become uncircumcised. Is any called in uncircumcision? let him not be circumcised. Circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing, but the keeping of the commandments of God. 20 Let every man abide in the same calling wherein he was called. 21 Art thou called *being* a servant? care not for it: but if thou mayest be made free, use *it* rather. 22 For he that is called in the Lord, *being* a servant, is the Lord's freeman: likewise also he that is called, *being* free, is Christ's servant. 23 Ye are bought with a price; be not ye the servants of men. 24 Brethren, let every man, wherein he is called, therein abide with God.

1. How many times did Paul speak of the need to let every man walk, or abide, as he was called? What might be the reason the command was given multiple times?

a. Three.

b. Because of the importance of the command and the fact that many would be deceived and be guilty of teaching a doctrine that requires breaking up marriages.

2. Are church leaders who investigate marriages and take action based on their tradition rebelling against God's teaching to let every man walk, or abide, as he was called?

Yes.

3. Why do you suppose Paul interjected the matter of circumcision?

Because, like being divorced and married to another, it is something that cannot be undone.

4. Which of the following is correct?

a. Paul spoke of being free, as Christ's servant.

b. Paul told the Corinthians they were bought with a price and not to be servants of men.

c. Paul told the brethren to let every man abide in the sphere of life or that particular relationship in which he currently abode.

d. All the above.

Answer: d. All the above.

See Barnes' comments below:

As the Lord hath called everyone - That is, in the condition or circumstances in which anyone is when he is called by the Lord to be a Christian.

So let him walk - In that sphere of life; in that calling 1Co 7:20; in that particular relation in which he was, let him remain, unless he can consistently change it for the better, and there let him illustrate the true beauty and excellence of religion. This was designed to counteract the notion that the fact of embracing a new religion dissolved the relations of life which existed before. This idea probably prevailed extensively among the Jews. Paul's object is to show that the gospel, instead of dissolving those relations, only strengthened them, and enabled those who were converted the better to discharge the duties which grow out of them.

Directions concerning the state of virginity or celibacy (25-28):

7:25 Now concerning virgins I have no commandment of the Lord: yet I give my judgment, as one that hath obtained mercy of the Lord to be faithful. 26 I suppose therefore that this is good for the present distress, *I say, that it is good for a man so to be.*

1. Can we conclude that one of the questions asked of Paul was whether even a virgin should marry?

Yes.

2. Did Paul have a command of the Lord with which to answer this question?

No.

3. What was Paul's answer and why did he say what he said?

He said it was good not to be married because of the present distress.

4. What was the “present distress,” and was the advice intended to be applicable for all time?

a. It was a time of persecution from civil authorities.

b. No.

(1) That at that time they were subject to trials so severe as to render the advice which he was about to give proper; and,

(2) That he by no means meant that this should be a “permanent arrangement” in the church, and of course it cannot be urged as an argument for the monastic system. (**Barnes**)

5. Would the “present distress” likely be a reason given for those separated to remain in that state, rather than marry another?

Maybe, but the real admonition given for the woman who left was that she might reconcile with her husband and that, since she was merely separated, it would be adultery to marry someone else.

7:27 Art thou bound unto a wife? seek not to be loosed. Art thou loosed from a wife? seek not a wife.

“Do you have a wife? Don't seek a divorce. Are you divorced from your wife? Don't look for another one.” (**GW**)

1. Did Paul deviate from specifically addressing virgins to addressing those who were “bound” (married) and those “loosed” (divorced)?

Yes.

2. Which of the following answers best explains why Paul deviated from addressing virgins?

- a. He was illustrating the meaning of “so to be” in verse 26.
- b. He was dealing with the question of whether one should live celibate and took the opportunity to apply his answer more broadly to include both the married and the divorced.

[Illustrating the meaning of “so to be,” [1Co 7:26](#). Neither the married (those “bound to a wife”) nor the unmarried (those “loosed from a wife”) are to “seek” a change of state (compare [1Co 7:20](#), [1Co 7:24](#)).] **JFB**

3. What is the apparent meaning of the word “bound”?

To be bound is to be married.

4. Does how the word translated “loosed” is used in context help define the meaning? What is the opposite of “bound” or “married”?

- a. Yes.
- b. Divorced.

5. Did Paul give any indication that one can be “loosed” but still “bound”?

No. That idea was first taught by J. T. Smith in “Searching the Scriptures” in the mid ‘80s as a means of trying to harmonize Paul’s teaching with the traditional idea of what Jesus taught.

7:28 But and if thou marry, thou hast not sinned; and if a virgin marry, she hath not sinned. Nevertheless such shall have trouble in the flesh: but I spare you.

1. What two groups was Paul addressing when he stated they would not sin if they chose to marry, despite the “present distress” and the warning of trouble to come?

The “loosed” (divorced) and the virgins (never married).

2. Does the apostle in any way so much as hint that the persons he addressed, who would not sin by marrying, were only the ones who had initiated the divorce for some particular reason?

No.

Gil: But and if thou marry, thou sinnest not... If a man that has never been married, or one that has, if legally loosed from his wife, thinks fit to marry, he commits no sin, he breaks no law of God, far from it; marriage is honourable in all. The apostle would be understood, that in the advice he before gives, he is not dissuading from marriage, as a thing sinful and criminal; only that it was more advisable to such as could to abstain from it, under the present circumstances of things; and what he says of a man holds equally true of a virgin:

3. What other group, previously noted, is addressed in this chapter?

Those who asked the questions were addressed. This would include anyone since that time who might seek answers to the same questions. Thus, according to this text, those who are "loosed" (divorced) do not sin in marrying. This should be understood by today's preachers and elders who purport to teach and practice New Testament Christianity: they should not charge divorced people with sin when they marry again.

4. When a teacher has concerns as to what to do or what to tell someone whom he learns has been divorced, what passage(s) are typically used?

Matthew 19:9.

5. Name as many New Testament passages as you can that deal with the question "Who may marry?" that are often withheld by preachers when they attempt to show someone what the Bible says?

Matthew 5:17-19; Mark 10:11; 1 Corinthians 7:1, 2; 8, 9; 27, 28; 1 Tim. 4:1-3.

6. Are these answers from Paul clear, plain and easily comprehensible for people who understand that the sin Jesus condemned was putting away but not divorcing?

Yes.

7. Should a gospel preacher ignore, disregard or pervert any relevant scriptures in order to remain true and faithful to human tradition?

No.

How all should behave themselves in the things of this life, in reference to eternity (29-31):

7:29 But this I say, brethren, the time *is* short: it remaineth, that both they that have wives be as though they had none;

Clark: The time is short - These persecutions and distresses are at the door, and life itself will soon be run out. Even then Nero was plotting those grievous persecutions with which he not only afflicted, but devastated the Church of Christ.

They that have wives - Let none begin to think of any comfortable settlement for his family, let him sit loose to all earthly concerns, and stand ready prepared to escape for his life, or meet death, as the providence of God may permit. The husband will be dragged from the side of his wife to appear before the magistrates, and be required either to abjure Christ or die.

7:30 And they that weep, as though they wept not; and they that rejoice, as though they rejoiced not; and they that buy, as though they possessed not;

Barnes: And they that weep - They who are afflicted.

As though they wept not - Restraining and moderating their grief by the hope of the life to come. "The general idea in all these expressions is, that in whatever situation Christians are, they should be dead to the world, and not improperly affected by passing events."

Clark: They that weep, etc. - There will shortly be such a complete system of distress and confusion that private sorrows and private joys will be absorbed in the weightier and more oppressive public evils: yet, let every man still continue in his calling, let him buy, and sell, and traffic, as usual; though in a short time, either by the coming persecution or the levelling hand of death, he that had earthly property will be brought into the same circumstances with him who had none.

7:31 And they that use this world, as not abusing *it*: for the fashion of this world passeth away.

Barnes: And they that use this world - That make a necessary and proper use of it to furnish raiment, food, clothing, medicine, protection, etc. It is right so to use the world, for it was made for these purposes. The word using here refers to the lawful use of it (χρῶμενοι chrō menoī).

As not abusing it - καταχρῶμενοι katachrō menoī. The preposition κατα kata, in composition here has the sense of “too much, too freely,” and is taken not merely in an intensive sense, but to denote evil, the abuse of the world. It means that we are not to use it to EXCESS; we are not to make it a mere matter of indulgences, or to make that the main object and purpose of our living. We are not to give our appetites to indulgence; our bodies to riot; our days and nights to feasting and revelry.

The trials of the married state (32-35):

7:32 But I would have you without carefulness. He that is unmarried careth for the things that belong to the Lord, how he may please the Lord: **33** But he that is married careth for the things that are of the world, how he may please *his* wife. **34** There is difference *also* between a wife and a virgin. The unmarried woman careth for the things of the Lord, that she may be holy both in body and in spirit: but she that is married careth for the things of the world, how she may please *her* husband. **35** And this I speak for your own profit; not that I may cast a snare upon you, but for that which is comely, and that ye may attend upon the Lord without distraction.

In the above passage, Paul explains the advantages of not being married—noting that one can better serve the Lord without the distraction of a spouse.

Please note some passages that indicate Paul was not teaching that it is wrong to marry, or be married:

1 Cor. 7:1-2; 6-9; 17; 27-28; 36.

Directions concerning the state of virginity or celibacy (36-38):

7:36 But if any man think that he behaveth himself uncomely toward his virgin, if she pass the flower of *her* age, and need so require, let him do what he will, he sinneth not: let them marry.

Commentators are not in agreement as to whether this text refers to the girl's father or the girl's betrothed, or boyfriend. The following are versions that DO NOT support the idea that it is the FATHER that might think "he behaveth himself uncomely toward his virgin."

(CEV) But suppose you are engaged to someone old enough to be married, and you want her so much that all you can think about is getting married. Then go ahead and marry. There is nothing wrong with that.

(ESV) If anyone thinks that he is not behaving properly toward his betrothed, if his passions are strong, and it has to be, let him do as he wishes: let them marry—it is no sin.

(GNB) In the case of an engaged couple who have decided not to marry: if the man feels that he is not acting properly toward the young woman and if his passions are too strong and he feels that they ought to marry, then they should get married, as he wants to. There is no sin in this.

(ISV) If a man thinks he is not behaving properly toward his virgin, and if his passion is too strong and he feels he ought to, let him do what he wants; he isn't sinning. Let them get married.

1. According to Paul's statement above, who has the choice to marry or not to marry his virgin?

"Any man."

2. If church leaders tell a man who has no marriage that he is not eligible for marriage, are they obeying the teaching of Paul?

No.

7:37 Nevertheless he that standeth stedfast in his heart, having no necessity, but hath power over his own will, and hath so decreed in his heart that he will keep his virgin, doeth well.

This text supports the idea that verse 36 is talking about the MAN and his GIRLFRIEND, rather than the FATHER and his DAUGHTER. The KJV is not clear but the following versions, if correct, leave no doubt:

(BBE) But the man who is strong in mind and purpose, who is not forced but has control over his desires, does well if he comes to the decision to keep her a virgin.

(ESV) But whoever is firmly established in his heart, being under no necessity but having his desire under control, and has determined this in his heart, to keep her as his betrothed, he will do well.

(GNB) But if a man, without being forced to do so, has firmly made up his mind not to marry, and if he has his will under complete control and has already decided in his own mind what to do---then he does well not to marry the young woman.

7:38 So then he that giveth *her* in marriage doeth well; but he that giveth *her* not in marriage doeth better.

In this text, the KJV supports the idea that the FATHER is involved, but the following versions do not:

(BBE) So then, he who gets married to his virgin does well, and he who keeps her unmarried does better.

(ESV) So then he who marries his betrothed does well, and he who refrains from marriage will do even better.

(ISV) So then the man who marries the virgin acts appropriately, but the man who refrains from marriage does even better.

How the wife is bound to her husband during his life, and her liberty to marry another after his death (39-40):

7:39 The wife is bound by the law as long as her husband liveth; but if her husband be dead, she is at liberty to be married to whom she will; only in the Lord.
40 But she is happier if she so abide, after my judgment: and I think also that I have the Spirit of God.

It is probable that in the above text Paul answered two questions that might have been similar to the following: 1) Who is the head of the house if the husband is not a Christian? 2) May a woman loosed from a husband marry another person who is not a Christian?

If this were the only verse that one looked at in studying the question “Who may marry?” it might be determined that the only way a woman could be free from a man is that he die.

1. List at least two problems with the idea that verse 39 teaches that only death frees one to marry.

- a. The idea contradicts the Bible’s teaching regarding divorce.
- b. It denies that divorce exists or that it does what it was intended to do.
- c. The text addresses only WOMEN, and therefore is not applicable to men.

To get the true idea of what Paul was teaching in this text it might be helpful to look at Romans 7:2. Here Paul said:

(ASV) For the woman that hath a husband is bound by law to the husband while he liveth; but if the husband die, she is discharged from the law of the husband.

(BBE) For the woman who has a husband is placed by the law under the power of her husband as long as he is living; but if her husband is dead, she is free from the law of the husband.

(DRB) For the woman that hath an husband, whilst her husband liveth is bound to the law. But if her husband be dead, she is loosed from the law of her husband.

The woman is bound by the law of her husband, indicating that the “law” noted in this text, and in 1 Corinthians 7:39, is something different from the Law of Moses, the law of the land or the law of Christ. The law of her husband apparently described her duties to him as outlined by the apostle Paul. When Paul, in Romans 7:4, indicated that “them that know the Law” (Jews, verse 1) could be married to Christ it becomes clear that divorce does what it was intended to do (Jer. 3:8) and that even the divorced has a scriptural, moral and legal right to marry.

Barnes - To her husband - She is united to him; and is under his authority as the head of the household. To him is particularly committed the headship of the family, and the wife is subject to his law, in the Lord, [Eph 5:23](#), [Eph 5:33](#).

2. If a man gives his wife a “bill of divorcement” is she still under his law, the law of the land, the Law of Christ or in some way not eligible to marry?

No. Deut. 24:1-2 states that she “**may go be another man’s wife.**” The “unmarried” (divorced) may marry and the “loosed” (divorced) may also marry.

3. What does “only in the Lord” mean?

Some contend that it means not to marry a pagan or a man who is an atheist. Most commentaries and versions support the idea that “only in the Lord” means to marry only a Christian. More likely, the phrase “only in the Lord” means “as the Lord wills”. This would involve marrying “lawfully” or “rightfully.” This was certainly a concern that Jesus had when he proclaimed that men who sent away a woman would cause her to commit adultery, as well as the man that would marry her. Under the Old Testament, the Priests could not marry just anyone. They could not marry “people of the land” (Ezra 10:11) and they could not marry a woman described in the following text: (Le 21:7) “**They shall not take a wife that is a whore, or profane; neither shall they take a woman put away from her husband: for he is holy unto his God.**”

Clark, quoted below is one of a number of commentators that take the position that the widow should marry only a Christian:

Clark: “...If the husband die, she is free to remarry, but only in the Lord; that is she must not marry a heathen nor an irreligious man; and she should not only marry a genuine Christian, but one of her own religious sentiments; for, in reference to domestic peace, much depends on this.”

Below are only a few of the versions that support the idea that “only in the Lord” means the widow should marry only a Christian:

(CEV) **A wife should stay married to her husband until he dies. Then she is free to marry again, but only to a man who is a follower of the Lord.**

(DRB) **A woman is bound by the law as long as her husband liveth: but if her husband die, she is at liberty. Let her marry to whom she will: only in the Lord.**

(ESV) **A wife is bound to her husband as long as he lives. But if her husband dies, she is free to be married to whom she wishes, only in the Lord.**

(GNB) A married woman is not free as long as her husband lives; but if her husband dies, then she is free to be married to any man she wishes, but only if he is a Christian.

(GW) A married woman must remain with her husband as long as he lives. If her husband dies, she is free to marry anyone she wishes, but only if the man is a Christian.

The “Lord” is Christ. To be “in the Lord,” then, means to be in Christ. The phrase “in Christ” is found 78 times in the New Testament. To be in the church is to be in the body of Christ, since the body and the church are the same (Eph. 1:22-23). Thus, it can be said with near certainty that when Paul said a widow should marry “only in the Lord” he was talking about marrying a Christian.

4. Did Paul give his opinion or judgment that the widow would be happier if she remained “as she is”—in the unmarried state?

Yes.

5. What reason(s) might be given to support the logic in Paul’s advice?

a. The circumstances described as “the present distress.”

b. A widow might be more prone to being deceived by a man who would marry her to obtain her belongings. Certainly, if a man married her and then took all her assets and kicked her out of the house she would then be in a miserable state.

6. Name at least two possible interpretations of “only in the Lord” as applicable to the Christian widow relating to her marrying again.

a. She must marry “rightfully” or “lawfully.”

b. She must marry in accordance with the will of the Lord.

c. She must marry only a Christian.

Additional References:

This workbook may be obtained from the author in colour as seen on the web site, bound with plastic comb for only \$10.00, to cover cost of printing and shipping.

www.TotalHealth.bz

<http://www.totalhealth.bz/Open-Bible-Study-Regarding-Who-Has-Right-To-Marriage.pdf>

<http://www.totalhealth.bz/marriage-divorce-remarriage-links.htm>

<http://www.put-away-but-not-divorced.com/>

<http://www.christianbook.com/not-divorced-true-intention-divorce-remarriage/robert-waters/9781613462232/pd/462233>

<http://www.amazon.com/Put-Away-But-Not-Divorced/dp/1613462239>

<http://www.totalhealth.bz/marriage-divorce-remarriage-debates.htm>

“Who May Marry?” is a 16 page attractive 4x5 tract, for only \$6.00 for 10.