

## Gamma 2017

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It is a very practical chapter that looks into how you apply principles of the gospel in everyday life. In the society, no different from our society we have two poles. On one side we have got the sexually liberated where sex is for your stomach, your stomach is for sex. On the other side we have ultraconservative which says, if I am sexless then I am very holy.

1 Corinthians 7:1 (ESV) **Now concerning the matters about which you wrote: "It is good for a man not to have sexual relations with a woman."**

So you must understand that Corinthians is an occasional letter, which means it is written in response to somebody else who wrote to you. So when you are listening to a telephone call, you cannot understand all of it, because the other guy on the phone has said the whole bunch of things which you don't know, but you are just seeing one side of the telephone conversation. So Corinthians is like that. So there must be somebody who said that and he wrote, it is good for a man not to have sexual relations with a woman. So celibacy is the best thing according to them.

The idea of ascetism is very prevalent among all religions. In Hindus and Buddhism if you don't have sex then you are more spiritual. We have got nuns; nuns are married to Jesus Christ. So if you are married to Jesus Christ you don't have sex, you give that up, but is this a more spiritual dimension.

1 Corinthians 7:2 (ESV) **But because of the temptation to sexual immorality, each man should have his own wife and each woman her own husband.**

The word 'have' in the Greek is always used in context of a married couple, which means each man should have sexual relations with his own wife. It doesn't mean everyone should get married but each married person find satisfaction with his own spouse.

1 Corinthians 7:3-5 **The husband should give to his wife her conjugal rights, and likewise the wife to her husband. 4 For the wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does. Likewise the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does. 5 Do not deprive one another, except perhaps by agreement for a limited time, that you may devote yourselves to prayer; but then come together again, so that Satan may not tempt you because of your lack of self-control.**

First thing about sex is that you cannot deprive each other. Basically, it is free, it is within the context of the marriage, you cannot deprive. We deprive each other because we weaponize sex. This is more for the ladies. They will withhold sex in order to coheres the man to do what they want

to do. It is a fact of life. They hold out because man sexual desires are usually stronger than woman, so they weaponize sex. So Paul is saying, you do not deprive each other, so it applies either way. A man can also deprive a woman as well. It is cast in such a way that it is like your debt, you owe somebody something. If you are in a marriage, then you owe your spouse basically sex. There is a mutuality in conjugal rights and authority.

So you have got either abstinence or liberation but in the Christian idea is not you owe me but I owe you. So you don't come to the wife and say you owe me, it is basically I owe you that is the other way of which they look around, so it is unconditional. It doesn't say you have sex if it is nice to you and you don't have sex if it is not nice to you. So you cannot use it for bribe, reward for good behavior or withheld this threat of punishment. Why, because I don't have authority over my own body to do as I please, do not deprive each other because the other person owns your body.

Now if we look in the Roman time husbands privilege and wife's obligations. The husband can have sex whenever he wants. The wife has to put out because it is her obligation. In Paul two belong to one another in total mutuality which means the husband also has to owe the wife sex as well.

In real life we have got this issue called 'desire discrepancy disorder' which means the desire of the husband and the desire of wife do not coincide. In most times in life you marry someone with a different level of desire, usually a man would have more sexual desire than a woman. So there is this huge desire discrepancy that is there and how do they handle it. For example, this is from science. A woman's sexual desire will drop the moment the babies come, it really hits the ground and it is bad news for man. It does not come back to normal until the children have left and gone to school. So there are a lot of problems there in itself because there you start blaming and the more she withholds, the more he wants, the more he wants he becomes critical and resentful and she starts to withdraw from him because she says "all he wants from me is sex only. I am treated like an object" and he doesn't understand that in real life your desires start to drop. Even for a man his desire for sex will drop eventually at the age of 45 and above as their testosterone level will drop 2% per year until they are 80 years old your testosterone is like one sixth it used to be. So it gradually drops. So there is a whole problem with desire discrepancy which causes a lot of trouble within marriage.

### **Corroboration from Science:**

Science actually corroborates Christian values. There is a study from Muise and Kogan and they got this concept of Sexual Communal Strength, which is basically a person's motivation to meet the other partner's sexual needs and they found that through their study that the more your sexual communal strength is there, for example, you have got high sexual communal strength which means *"no expectation of immediate reciprocation—were less concerned with the negatives of having sex -- such as feeling tired the next day. They are more focused on the benefits to their partner of engaging in sex, such as making their partner feel loved and desired."*

So the higher your sexual communal strength the less your expectation of immediate reciprocation.

### **Results of Studies:**

*More likely to engage in sex with their partner in these situations and also led to both partners feeling more satisfied with their sex life and relationship. This means that even though they engaged in sex to*

*meet their partner's needs, they reaped important benefits for themselves. In fact, communal people maintained feelings of satisfaction even in these desire discrepant situations.*

What science is telling you is that even though you got discrepant desires, one more than the other, but if the other accommodates the other one, in the end they actually both feel better off, which is what Paul is trying to tell you 2000 years before this study came out.

*"Our findings suggest that if one partner is interested in having sex, but the other partner isn't in the mood, being motivated to meet a partner's sexual needs can benefit both partners. It is very important, however, that this motivation to meet a partner's needs comes from a place of agency, where people feel that they are able to meet their partner's needs, and a delight in seeing ones partner happy"*

They are non-Christian authors and it corroborates what Paul says. Paul says, it is a mutuality, it is not you owe me, it is I owe you, strong communal sexual health.

### How do specific couples overcome this?

There is another study which was published in the Journal of Sexual Medicine in 2014 and they looked at all the strategies couples use in order to overcome this desire discrepancy.

Emergent Themes	%	No (n=58)
Communication	36.2	21
Schedule sex/ set frequency goals	20.7	12
Lingerie/sex clothing	15.5	9
Date night	13.8	8
Start and then get aroused	12.1	7
Toys	10.3	6
Make time alone	10.3	6
Cuddling without sex	8.6	5

### What if your spouse wanted to have a tattoo or have plastic surgery?

4 For the wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does. Likewise, the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does.

If we were to take this verse out of context that means that everything a woman does must have the husband's consent and everything a man does also needs the wife's consent. But if we read this in the context of this verse it only applies to sex. So what a lot of people do is that they take everything out of context and they apply it everywhere that is why we get so much of wrong doctrine. Scripture only say it regarding sex and nothing else. So if a lady wants to have a tattoo or plastic surgery she can do.

### The only time sex stops

1 Corinthians 7:5 (ESV) Do not deprive one another, except perhaps by agreement for a limited time, that you may devote yourselves to prayer; but then come together again, so that Satan may not tempt you because of your lack of self-control.

Sex is so important in marriage that the only time it stops is by agreement. There is no unilateral, it must be by mutual agreement and not only that for a limited period of time, so it may be a short period of time that you may devote yourself. We are talking about sex, if you are putting in terms of priority in terms of a marriage it becomes only second to prayer. As you live and breathe and pray to God it is only second to pray, and even then you don't pray all the time, so this is only for short period of time. So this is how important sex is in the context of your marriage. So if you deprive each other of too long there will be lack of self-control and there is a lot of immorality especially in the time of Corinthians and also in our society today.

### **Lesson**

- Importance and centrality of sex
- Protection of each other from the dangers of immorality in a godless culture
- The spouse cannot meet all your needs but there is one need that the only the spouse can uniquely meet
- Sex is godliness. Some people say sex is dirty, is horrible, you do it because you want to have children, you just tolerate for a little while that is not it. God created sex to bind the couple together and sex is godliness as it were.

### **Avoid Extremes**

So don't be Victorian and don't think about sex, you only think of sex to procreate or don't be a maniac, every minute you are thinking about sex.

### **Teaching our children**

I think it is a good idea to start them young and it should come from the parents rather than the world. If children are taught sex by this distorted world, then they will fall into a lot of trouble, so you actually have to start teaching your children about sex.

### **SINGLENES**

Singleness is like a city under siege, half the people want to get in and the other half want to get out. It is so common, one third of people in the society are single and all of us who are married one day will be single, unless a couple dies together. So singleness is very important to talk about.

Now there is a lot of stigma. They use to call single woman 'spinster', nowadays you are liberated single. Other times:

- Unfulfilled physically
- Psychologically alone
- Loss of potential
- Vulnerable
- Unwanted
- Defective
- Socially awkward

## Struggle with God

Because you are lonely, may be you think God has failed you. Even though you are very dedicated and you lead Bible study, you sacrifice, you tithe, you are a disciple and then you blame all your current problems on the lack of spouse. You may think that God made man and woman and you are alone and you are unfulfilled. So marriage is like self-fulfillment. It is like this show Jerry McGuire and we have got Tom Cruise at one end of the room and Renee Zellweger is on the other side and he has got this famous quote at the end of the story where he says, “you complete me” and she says, “you had me at hello”. But this is a western idea of marriage. Marriage is that I am half and you are the other half and you complete me. If I am not married I am incomplete, I am unfulfilled, I am half a person and we perpetuate this. So therefore marriage is about being fulfilled. The primary goal in life is to be happy

1 Corinthians 7:7 (ESV) *I wish that all were as I myself am. But each has his own gift from God, one of one kind and one of another.*

The gift is called ‘charisma’. Same word for speaking in tongue, same word for prophecy, so it is a gift. The idea of gift is like something that you unfold and you get excited and you can use it, but the idea of Christian gift is different. This gift is given to you so that it blesses the body. So when you are given the gift of singleness, it is actually used to bless the body.

1 Corinthians 12:7 (ESV) *To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good*

1 Corinthians 12:11 (ESV) *All these are empowered by one and the same Spirit, who apportions to each one individually as he wills.*

For example, when you get the gift of singleness you don’t have the choice.

1 Corinthians 7:8-9 (ESV) *To the unmarried and the widows I say that it is good for them to remain single, as I am. 9 But if they cannot exercise self-control, they should marry. For it is better to marry than to burn with passion.*

So if you are a single, if you are a widow or widower and

- have the gift of singleness
- not overly tempted to sexual immorality
- devoted to serving the lord

But if you are a single person and you don’t think that you have a gift of celibacy and overly tempted to sexual immorality, you are distracted by lust from serving the lord then getting married is the best solution.

*9 But if they cannot exercise self-control, they should marry. For it is better to marry than to burn with passion.*

So basically marriage is a choice. So if you look at Japanese marriages. They are used to be from arrange marriages in 1940s and now love marriages are going up. Divorce rate in Japan is now 1 in 3. The rate is four times now the rate in 1950s and double that of 1970s. You have got love marriages

on the rise, arrange marriages going flat down and love marriages are not working because everybody is getting divorced.

### What if you are forced to be single?

In real life we have people like this who are socially awkward, poor, too picky, ugly, had bad habits or are disabled.

1 Corinthians 12:7 (ESV) *To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good*

1 Corinthians 7:17 (ESV) *Only let each person lead the life that the Lord has assigned to him, and to which God has called him. This is my rule in all the churches.*

The verse says that some of you of which God will call you to something and that calling will be, if you are married stay married, if you are single stay single. So that is the situation here. If you look from the point of view that only marriage or sex will fulfill me that mean God is withholding this from me then you get very upset, but there is a calling. So in life there is a calling to which God puts you and that is something that you need to look at.

### What is if you are born blind?

In John chapter 9 there is a man born blind and then they asked him, was he born blind why, because his parents sin or he sin and Jesus says, neither his parents sin nor he sinned, it is for the glory of God. In God's eyes we are all beautiful but in other people says they see for beauty and they don't want to marry you. Ecclesiastes chapter 3 says, he has made everything beautiful in its time. When time comes you will see why you are like that.

### The advantages of singleness

#### 1. Trouble

1 Corinthians 7:28 (ESV) *But if you do marry, you have not sinned, and if a betrothed woman marries, she has not sinned. Yet those who marry will have worldly troubles, and I would spare you that.*

So nothing wrong with having a gift of singleness because when you get married you are going to have a lot of trouble. Archbishop Geoffrey Fisher says *"A woman is a great help to a man in all the problems he never had as a bachelor"*

It is not easy being in a marriage. Someone else said

- *"All marriages are happy it's the living together afterwards that causes all the trouble"*
- *"Although love may begin when you sink in his arms it has a tendency to continue with your arms in his sink"*

So either way living together with another sinful human being is extremely-extremely difficult. So Paul is just saying that there are advantages of singleness because it will spare you all the worldly trouble. In Paul's time they were facing persecution and the first person they pick in your family is

your wife or your children and then they use that to threaten the man. If you are single, then they can grab whatever they like and you are spared that anxiety.

## 2. Limited Time

1 Corinthians 7:29-31 (ESV) *This is what I mean, brothers: the appointed time has grown very short. From now on, let those who have wives live as though they had none, 30 and those who mourn as though they were not mourning, and those who rejoice as though they were not rejoicing, and those who buy as though they had no goods, 31 and those who deal with the world as though they had no dealings with it. For the present form of this world is passing away.*

There is limited time. You are living as it were, you are playing football on extra time and as Paul is thinking the second coming of Christ is coming. So during that time it is so short to do God's work that singleness may be a better idea because you are not besought of all the troubles that the marrieds would have.

## 3. Divided interests-mind

1 Corinthians 7:32-34 (ESV) *I want you to be free from anxieties. The unmarried man is anxious about the things of the Lord, how to please the Lord. 33 But the married man is anxious about worldly things, how to please his wife, 34 and his interests are divided. And the unmarried or betrothed woman is anxious about the things of the Lord, how to be holy in body and spirit. But the married woman is anxious about worldly things, how to please her husband.*

It is a fact; you get married the first think happens when you kids will start coming out all things that you were used to do before you cannot do anymore. You never stop worrying about your children, even though they may be old, they have their own job you still keep worrying about them. Because of a woman and a man's time are divided. Now Paul is not saying that one is worse than the other. He is not saying that it is more godly to be unmarried, nor is he saying that it is more Godly to be single. He is just saying that there is divided interest, from now onwards you are divided.

When you are single you can do a lot for the Lord but when you get married then you are divided and therefore your productivity drops. So that is a fact of life.

## 4. Personal fulfilment

1 Corinthians 7:38-40 (ESV) *38 So then he who marries his betrothed does well, and he who refrains from marriage will do even better. 39 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. 40 Yet in my judgment she is happier if she remains as she is. And I think that I too have the Spirit of God.*

So if you are talking about fulfillment, Paul is actually saying that you are going to be more fulfilled being single. Because you will be more worried about being holy and sat apart for God. All of us married people will again be single one day, so therefore there will be another time where you could also be very-very effective for God. So there are a lot of advantages of being single.

## The Real Position of Marriage

Marriage is nobodies ultimate destination because one or other will die. Only in heaven there will be complete. Do not think that the most important thing in your world is must getting married, it is not the ultimate destination. That is what Jesus said, in heaven will there be any marriage. No, you will be with your spouse but there will be perfect communication but without the physicality of it.

So Walter Trobisch wrote this book called Love is a Feeling to be Learned. He said  
*"To give up oneself is as important for a single person as it is for one who is married. Those who learn this art will never be lonely even if they are single. Those who don't will be always be lonely even though they are married. The task we have to face is the same whether we are married or we are single to live a fulfilled life in spite of many unfulfilled desires "*

So the issue in life is learning to give not to receive. Learning to give of yourself. Whether you are married or single, you give yourself being married to your spouse. If you are single learn to give yourself to other people. That is where you actually find fulfilment.

## The Real Fulfillment of the Single Person

- Worth, fulfillment and peace are not exclusively questions of biology
- They transcend our situations
- In acceptance lies piece

Paul says, *"Christians have a higher view of sexuality, yet we are more free from the need for it than anyone who has ever lived."*

Tim Keller says

*...to my marriage partner to help my marriage partner be everything that Christ wants him or her to be. It's supposed to be a way of service and not just self-fulfillment," "On the other hand, marriage can never give you all the things that you are really looking for. It's only in Jesus' arms that you can ever really find what you are looking for in a spouse and it's only in the family of God and the church....On the other hand marriage can never give you all the things that you are really looking for, it is only in Jesus arms that you can really find of what you are looking for in a spouse. It is only in the family of God and in the church.'* So basically marriage or singleness it is about giving yourself away either to a spouse or to the Lord. It is not the final destination.

Finds a wife is a good thing. It does not specify the woman of his dreams but one that does not distract him too much from the priorities of the kingdom. If you don't find a wife remaining single is better, just flee from youthful lust. Either way, Paul leaves it as an open thing.

So when you are thinking about singleness or marriage you have to juggle few things, whether you have the gift, sexual desire and opportunity. They are three circles that will be there. You may have all a lot of desire, cannot control or you may have the gift and not much desire and then no opportunity so all of this will go but the bottom line is that you find fulfillment in the Lord, how you glorify God.



## DIVORCE

1 Corinthians 7:10-11 (ESV) To the married I give this charge (not I, but the Lord): the wife should not separate from her husband **11** (but if she does, she should remain unmarried or else be reconciled to her husband), and the husband should not divorce his wife.

So basically you do not separate or divorce. If you divorce you must remain unmarried or be reconciled to the husband, because the Christian faith is about reconciliation, we are reconciled to Christ, to God through the cross.

Mark 10:11-12 (ESV) And he said to them, “Whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery against her, **12** and if she divorces her husband and marries another, she commits adultery.”

### Unequally Yoked

1 Corinthians 7:12-16 (ESV) To the rest I say (I, not the Lord) that if any brother has a wife who is an unbeliever, and she consents to live with him, he should not divorce her. **13** If any woman has a husband who is an unbeliever, and he consents to live with her, she should not divorce him. **14** For the unbelieving husband is made holy because of his wife, and the unbelieving wife is made holy because of her husband. Otherwise your children would be unclean, but as it is, they are holy.

So if you have happened to married a non-Christian, or both of you being non-Christian and one of you became Christian what should you do. So here we are talking about a situation where the Corinthians want to change. They just became Christians and suddenly their spouse is not Christian and they try to refuse to become a Christian. They wanted to change their situation. So Paul says, no, even though they are non-Christians you stay with them. There is a reason. If you are married to a non-Christian you are holy, set apart for God. What about the husband/wife? How are they made holy? Let me give you a clue about how this works.

1 Corinthians 6:15-17 (ESV) **15** Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I then take the members of Christ and make them members of a prostitute? Never! **16** Or do you not know that he who is joined to a prostitute becomes one body with her? For, as it is written, “The two will become one flesh.” **17** But he who is joined to the Lord becomes one spirit with him

If you join yourself to a non-Christian spouse it is the same thing. It is the marriage. Your marriage to the non-believing spouse by the vows of marriage God looks at your marriage, even though that person is not a Christian it considers that union holy, set apart. So it is not the same as you having sex with a prostitute which is unholy. So therefore your children also will be considered holy, set apart for God. There is also opportunity for you to share the gospel with your spouse and basically they will become Christian.

**13** If any woman has a husband who is an unbeliever, and he consents to live with her, she should not divorce him. **14** For the unbelieving husband is made holy because of his wife, and the unbelieving wife is made holy because of her husband. Otherwise your children would be unclean, but as it is, they are holy. **15** But if the unbelieving partner separates, let it be so. In such cases the brother or sister is not enslaved. God has called you to peace. **16** For how do you know, wife,

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

So if your husband or wife who is not a Christian and wants to leave you then you are not bound. Most common interpretation is that if your non-Christian spouse wants to walk out from your life then you allow them to go because you did your best to hold them back.

### GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR LIVING UNDER THE GOSPEL

1 Corinthians 7:17 (ESV) *Only let each person lead the life that the Lord has assigned to him, and to which God has called him. This is my rule in all the churches.*

Gospel transcends all social distinctions. He gave us two examples. Circumcision and slavery.

1 Corinthians 7:18-20 (ESV) **18** Was anyone at the time of his call already circumcised? Let him not seek to remove the marks of circumcision. Was anyone at the time of his call uncircumcised? Let him not seek circumcision. **19** For neither circumcision counts for anything nor uncircumcision, but keeping the commandments of God. **20** Each one should remain in the condition in which he was called.

So when you first become a Christian, at that time the Jews making everybody get circumcised. So he is telling you, if you are circumcised don't seek to be uncircumcised.

#### **Now is Paul saying salvation by works?**

No, he is saying work as evidence of salvation. A Christian is a one set aside by God to be holy but does not act in a holy manner, doesn't obey God's commandments probably not a Christian. Therefore, he says, these things are unimportant. The important thing is living a life consistent with the gospel of Jesus Christ. That's why we don't even in this church are discriminate against you, whether you got baptized or you didn't got baptized but although we encourage you to get baptize. In some churches, if you don't get baptize you cannot take Lord's Supper and you feel as if you are second class, because baptism is just like circumcision. It is an outward sign of an inward reality, it means nothing. Important thing is your faith in Christ, but we do encourage you to get baptized.

**20** Each one should remain in the condition in which he was called.

1 Corinthians 7:21-23 (ESV) *Were you a bondservant when called? Do not be concerned about it. (But if you can gain your freedom, avail yourself of the opportunity.)* **22** For he who was called in the Lord as a bondservant is a freedman of the Lord. Likewise, he who was free when called is a bondservant of Christ

Gordon Fee says, *"Whatever your situation was at the time of your call, don't let that become a concern to you. One's calling in Christ raises one above that urgency. In the context, after all, Paul is still addressing those who feel compelled to dissolve their marriages. Change may occur, but one's calling in Christ means that change is unnecessary, and certainly not to be a compulsion."*

It means that when you become a Christian it is not changing of profession or changing of marriage; it is actually changing the way you look at your job.

### 23 You were bought with a price; do not become bondservants of men.

So if you are a slave, you realize you are slave to man but in Christ you are free. If you are a free man you are actually free in man but you are also slaved to Christ. So basically freedom in Christ transcends human convention of slavery.

So it doesn't matter which job you go to, what Paul means is that you cannot let our job, our money, our status, our academic credentials, our achievements define us. We must go beyond that.

Many of us are so concerned about changing job, changing this, changing that. Changing circumstances is not important, Paul is saying that you should stay where you are, it is not changing the circumstances that is important, it is your heart on how you approach your job.

Hannah Yeo was commended by Sultan to be a very fair person, speaker of the Selangor parliament. So she is given a gift. She actually went to Bible college, was given a gift to actually be a Christian in politics, which is a very difficult job and because of that now somebody has now made a police report that she is using her biography to share the gospel and convert Muslims. They made a police report against her. She made a police report against them, but she is now undergoing persecution.

God gives you a gift but your gift comes with responsibility and comes with danger also. Paul is saying to each and every one of us that He will call you, but work your calling out wherever you are.