

1 CORINTHIANS: MOVING FROM THE CARNAL TO THE SPIRITUAL STATE

Part XIV: Properly Handling The Sexual Drive

(1 Corinthians 7:1-9)

I. Introduction

- A. With the effects of the 1960s sexual revolution, even many professing Christians have modified their past views to become morally lax with involvement in suggestive clothing, pornography, divorce and remarriage.
- B. After calling for believers to avoid immorality in 1 Corinthians 6:9-20, and aware of the God-given, intense power of the human sexual drive, Paul taught believers in 1 Corinthians 7:1-9 on properly handling that drive:

II. Properly Handling The Sexual Drive, 1 Corinthians 7:1-9.

- A. In view of the great amount of sexual sin that marked their culture at Corinth, some of the believers there had written a letter to Paul to ask him if it would be good that they practice sexual abstinence, 1 Corinthians 7:1.
- B. Paul answered that it was "good" for a man "not to touch a woman," to practice abstinence, in the sense of the *kalos* kind of "good," what is immediately seen to be "good" (U. B. S. Grk. N. T., 1966, p. 591; Moulton & Milligan, The Voc. of the Grk. N. T., 1972, p. 318-319) in that abstinence avoids immorality, 1 Cor. 7:1b.
- C. However, though sexual abstinence immediately avoids immoral acts, abstinence coupled with a powerful sexual drive that is not soon satisfied can actually pressure one all the more toward sin. Thus, Paul taught that if it was necessary to avoid immorality, believers should fulfill each other's needs in marriage, 1 Cor. 7:2-5:
 - 1. To avoid immorality, every husband should meet his sexual drive needs through his wife and likewise every wife through her husband, 1 Cor. 7:2. [Note how this call counters pornography and masturbation.]
 - 2. In this regard, the husband is responsible to meet the sexual drive needs of his wife, and his wife is responsible to meet the sexual drive needs of her husband, 1 Corinthians 7:3.
 - 3. Paul explained that the "right" or "control" (*exousia*, Ibid., U. B. S. Grk. N. T.; Ibid., Moulton & Milligan, p. 225) over the wife's body in this regard does not reside with the wife, but with her husband who has the sexual drive need that must be fulfilled, and that the "right" or "control" of the husband's body in this regard does not reside with him, but with his wife for the meeting of her sexual drive needs, 1 Cor. 7:4. Accordingly, neither husband nor wife has the right before God to refuse to meet the sexual drive needs of the other spouse, but to meet that spouse's need as that spouse expresses that he or she has the need.
 - 4. For this reason, Paul added that married couples should **stop** "slighting, rejecting, repulsing" (*apostereite*, present imperative of *apostrepho*, "slight, reject, repulse," Ibid., U. B. S. Grk. N. T.; The Analyt. Grk. Lex. (Zon.), 1972, p. 47) their marital partner from meeting his or her sexual drive need except it be by mutual spousal consent for a limited time to give each other opportunity for worship, but that they come together again to fulfill each other's sexual drive needs lest Satan tempt them to commit immorality for their lack of self control, 1 Corinthians 7:5. However, even this temporary mutual postponement of meeting sexual drive needs in marriage was a suggestion the Lord **allowed** Paul to give the Corinthians, but which Christ did not command, and this fact reveals that married couples must carefully avoid pressuring one another with any rejection of or excessive postponement of meeting their respective sexual drive needs!
- D. On the other hand, Paul expressed his wish that all men would be as himself, that they might have his gift of celibacy where he had no need to meet his personal sexual drive needs to avoid immorality, 1 Corinthians 7:7.
- E. Accordingly, he recommended that the unmarried and widowed actually did well if they did not need to get married to meet their sexual drive needs, but to remain single like Paul was, 1 Corinthians 7:8.
- F. However, if the unmarried and widowed cannot control their sexual drive needs apart from committing immorality, they were to marry, for it is better to marry than to burn in lust, 1 Corinthians 7:9.

Lesson: To handle his human sexual drive, (1) it is evidently good if a believer practices total sexual abstinence in that it avoids acts of immorality. (2) Thus, it is evidently good for a believer to choose to live as a celibate without getting married. (3) However, it is better to marry than to burn in lust, so that if one does not have the gift of celibacy, be he single or widowed, he should marry. (4) In marriage, the husband must realize his wife has the right to his body to meet her sexual needs, and the wife must realize her husband has the right to her body to meet his sexual needs, that they both stop defrauding one another in the matter. (5) The only way that abstinence is to be practiced in marriage is when it is done by mutual spousal consent for a limited time for each spouse to worship God, but that this time of abstinence be followed by the resumption of each spouse fulfilling his partner's needs.

Application: May we properly handle the human sexual drive need we have as directed by 1 Corinthians 7:1-9.