

Relationship Matters



Week Nine

inTro



Read This Week's Passage:
1 Corinthians 7:1–16

RELATIONSHIPS MATTER

“If someone says, ‘I love God,’ and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen?” (1 John 4:20). Our relationship with God is tested and strengthened through our human relationships. In other words, our Christianity finds its hands and feet in our human relationships. Without the human interaction, religion is just theory.

It is no wonder that the devil attacks relationships. A breakdown in human relationships spells disaster for our relationship with God. For instance, an absentee father makes it difficult for his child to conceive of God as a faithful Father. And an indulgent mother sets up her child to think any difficulties in life mean that God has forsaken them.

So the devil attacks human relationships as a means to destroy our relationship with God. The principal human relationship between man and woman is the object of his special interest. If he can distort that relationship, then he limits our ability to perceive God, since the image of God is reflected in the combination of male and female. He targets the marriage relationship; he attacks father/daughter and mother/son relationships; and he corrupts any interaction between men and women.

Wherever a healthy relationship exists, it provides an avenue to knowing God. A robust friendship illumines the Friend who sticks closer than a brother, and marriage, the most intimate of human relationships, provides a glimpse of the Trinity itself. This week we consider aspects of the intimate relationship.



inScribe

Write out 1 Corinthians 7:1–16 from the translation of your choice. If you're pressed for time, write out 1 Corinthians 7:3–9. You may also rewrite the passage in your own words, outline, or mind map the chapter.



Go back to your scribed text and study the passage.

Circle repeated words/phrases/ideas

Underline words/phrases that are important and have meaning to you

Draw **Arrows** to connect words/phrases to other associated or related words/phrases

What special insights do your marks seem overall to point to?

Memorize your favorite verse in 1 Corinthians 7:1–16. Write it out multiple times to help with memorization.

If you had to choose, would you rather be married to an unbeliever or remain single and why?

What are other principles of marriage from this passage?



Read more at
www.inversebible.org/will9-3

STAY THE COURSE

The seventh chapter of Paul's first letter to the church at Corinth was prompted by some questions the church asked him (7:1). While we do not have a transcript of their letter to him, we may infer some of their inquiries from his responses and what we know of the church historically. Broadly, we know that the questions were related to sexuality, since they prompted him to pen an entire section dealing with various aspects of it.

As the Corinthians were won to the faith, some of them found themselves in households with mixed spiritual convictions. In light of Amos 3:3, were they meant to remain married or should they sever those marital ties? Indeed, it is uniquely challenging to be married to someone you differ with at a fundamental level. If your worldviews differ irreconcilably, the simplest conversations can become stressful and conflict unmanageable. Moreover, in relationships where Christ is not central, two people who love each other end up setting each other up as idols. When one idolizes their partner but their partner does not reciprocate for love of God, the disproportionality results in marital strife.

It is clear, then, that anyone looking to marry should strive not to be unequally yoked. But what if you unwittingly find yourself to be already in a relationship with an unbeliever? You were not a believer when you married but have now come to know and love Christ. Paul's response was to view this as an evangelistic opportunity. When you think about it, if we are called to share the gospel with strangers, how much more should we be ministering to those closest to us?

This lesson applies in situations where the couple are of the same faith but have different convictions about certain things. That is bound to happen, because we each have our own personal relationship with God, and He leads us individually. Perhaps you experienced a revival but your partner did not. Or maybe your partner's responsibilities make it challenging for them to maintain a consistent devotional life so their spiritual life begins to suffer. As the one more closely connected to God, you have a calling to so exemplify the winsome love of Christ as to win your spouse over.

THIS NOT THAT

By instructing married couples not to “deprive one other” Paul establishes that sex is an essential element in a healthy marriage. It is not to be weaponized as a bargaining tool or used to manipulate your spouse. Rather, it is a blessed duty that wives and husbands owe each other.

A “duty” is barely how the media romanticize the sexual act. If television and romance novels are to be believed, ardent passion and spontaneity are necessary hallmarks of the act. On the other hand, duty connotes intentionality and responsibility—not the most “romantic” words. This unrealistic expectation of what sex between lovers should look like sets up those waiting until marriage for unnecessary disillusionment while glorifying sex outside of marriage for its attendant excitement.

Substituting sex for intimacy, the devil entices unmarried individuals to drink from broken cisterns. It has come to be common for sex to be part of the journey to getting to know someone romantically. If the sexual intercourse is not thrilling, the world says, then you’re not made for each other. If and when the sexual intercourse loses its ardor, a couple, whether married or not, is to believe that they are not well matched.

In reality, intimacy surpasses the sexual act, which is a manifestation of intimacy and not its definition. Sexual intercourse is the outworking of intimacy appropriate only within marriage. In marriage, it is an expression of closeness that brings the couple closer still. Outside of marriage, it deprives the parties of a deeper connection. Thus, before marriage, the devil does all he can to get you to engage in sexual intercourse; and after marriage he does all he can to keep you from intercourse with your spouse.



inTerpret

After looking at your scribed and annotated text, what special insights do your marks overall seem to point to?



What questions emerge after studying this passage? What parts are difficult?

What other principles and conclusions do you find?

Married or single, we are all sexual beings. What insight does Scripture offer for how we are to understand and experience our sexuality?



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What relationship do the following verses have with the primary passage?

2 Samuel 11

1 Thessalonians 4:3–7

Hebrews 4:14–16

What other verses/promises come to mind in connection with 1 Corinthians 7?

Review your memorized verse from 1 Corinthians 7:1–16.

When Adam first met Eve, the Bible states that “they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed” (Gen. 2:25). The picture drawn is one of full acceptance in the face of complete vulnerability. This is what we all crave in an intimate relationship.

Sin, however, has separated us from God primarily, and from each other consequently. Over and over again, in our human relationship, we get hurt when we open ourselves up to someone only to be rejected, if not ridiculed. We are constantly in danger of developing emotional calluses and steeling ourselves from hurt by shutting ourselves off. Every time we are hurt, we must choose to open ourselves up again to being hurt again.

Some of us have been hurt so many times that we are afraid to open ourselves up even to God. Would He accept us if He really knew us in and out? Our closest earthly friends may not accept us, and they are imperfect too. What more of a holy God?

The knowledge God has of us, as David recounts in Psalm 139, can be daunting. We do not even know ourselves that well! And if we did, we might not like ourselves. How could God know us so fully and still love us unreservedly? Yet the Bible testifies of Him saying, “Yes, I have loved you with an everlasting love” (Jer. 31:3). The ultimate expression of His love was sending Jesus to become one of us, live among us, and suffer death at our hands.

Not only does God accept us in spite of knowing us, but He also opens Himself up to be known by us. In doing so, He makes Himself vulnerable, and He is hurt many times over by our rejection of Him. The words of John 1:11 sting: “He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him.” “He is despised and rejected by men, a Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. and we hid, as it were, our faces from Him; He was despised, and we did not esteem Him” (Isa. 53:3). God took the first step to restore intimacy with us and invites us to trust Him by taking a step toward Him as well.

As broken human beings, we have a capacity for intimacy that is limited by our fear of rejection. But as we experience full acceptance in Jesus, we become better able to love others. True heart Christians are, therefore, best equipped for intimacy.



Where do you see Jesus in
1 Corinthians 7:1–16?



Have you experienced intimacy
with Jesus?

How do you see Jesus differently
or see Him again?

Prayer: How do you respond to
seeing Jesus in this way?



Read more at
www.inverseible.org/will9-6



Review the memory verse.
How does it apply to your
life this week?

After this week's study of the
chapter, what are personal
applications you are convicted
of in your life?

What are practical applications
you must make in your social life?



Read more inSight from the
Spirit of Prophecy at
www.inverseible.org/will9-7

THE LAW OF MARRIAGE

"In the youthful mind marriage is clothed with romance, and it is difficult to divest it of this feature, with which imagination covers it, and to impress the mind with a sense of the weighty responsibilities involved in the marriage vow. This vow links the destinies of the two individuals with bonds which naught but the hand of death should sever.

"Every marriage engagement should be carefully considered, for marriage is a step taken for life. Both the man and the woman should carefully consider whether they can cleave to each other through the vicissitudes of life as long as they both shall live.

"Among the Jews a man was permitted to put away his wife for the most trivial offenses, and the woman was then at liberty to marry again. This practice led to great wretchedness and sin. In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus declared plainly that there could be no dissolution of the marriage tie except for unfaithfulness to the marriage vow. 'Every one,' He said, 'that putteth away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, maketh her an adulteress: and whosoever shall marry her when she is put away committeth adultery.'

"When the Pharisees afterward questioned Him concerning the lawfulness of divorce, Jesus pointed His hearers back to the marriage institution as ordained at creation. 'Because of the hardness of your hearts,' He said, Moses 'suffered you to put away your wives: but from the beginning it was not so.' He referred them to the blessed days of Eden when God pronounced all things 'very good.' Then marriage and the Sabbath had their origin, twin institutions for the glory of God in the benefit of humanity. Then, as the Creator joined the hands of the holy pair in wedlock, saying, A man shall 'leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one,' He enunciated the law of marriage for all the children of Adam to the close of time. That which the eternal Father Himself had pronounced good was the law of highest blessing and development for man.

"Jesus came to our world to rectify mistakes and to restore the moral image of God in man. Wrong sentiments in regard to marriage had found a place in the minds of the teachers of Israel. They were making of none effect the sacred institution of marriage. Man was becoming so hardhearted that he would for the most trivial excuse separate from his wife, or, if he chose, he would separate her from the children and send her away. This was considered a great disgrace and was often accompanied by the most acute suffering on the part of the discarded one.

"Christ came to correct these evils, and His first miracle was wrought on the occasion of the marriage. Thus He announced to the world that marriage when kept pure and undefiled is a sacred institution."

(*Adventist Home*, p. 340-341)



Share insights from this week's memory verse and Bible study as well as any discoveries, observations, and questions with your Sabbath School class (or Bible study group). Consider these discussion questions with the rest of the group.



Should a believer stay in an abusive relationship with an unbeliever?

How can single persons safeguard against marrying someone who has the form of godliness but is not truly converted?

What encouragement could you give to someone whose spouse has backslidden?

In what ways do single people experience and express intimacy?

What should single people do with their sexual desires?

How should the church relate to those who are divorced?

How do we find healing for our brokenness?