

## 1 Cor 7:25-40 - "A Betrothal Proposal"

**Opener: Is it ok for a couple to live together if they know they're definitely going to get married?**

Note verse 24 and then read **1 Cor 7:25-35**. As you read note that the words "virgin" and "betrothed" have the same Greek root - context decides the translation.

**Q. Who is Paul addressing?**

A. Paul's addressing "virgins" but he could be addressing "betrothed". Betrothal was a firm commitment to marriage, it was much more binding than an engagement is today. Almost certainly Paul's addressing women of marriageable age.

**Q. What is going on in the world - what does Paul think is going to happen (vv29-31)?**

A. We can only speculate as to what Paul is addressing that is going on in the world but the language is that of apocalypse. Either Paul is talking about persecution from Rome (Nero, Titus) or he's talking about the expected parousia (second coming) - or both.

**Q. What is Paul's ideal for virgins / unmarried?**

A. Stay as you are (vv24, 26)

**Q. Why is it ideal?**

A. If he's addressing persecution then "wordly troubles" (v28) refers to what Jesus addresses in Mark 13:17-19. If he's think about Jesus' return, maybe he's referring to what Jesus addresses in Matthew 25:1-13. Either way Paul wants singles to be "free from anxiety" (v32) so they can give their "undivided devotion to the Lord" (v35).

Read **1 Cor 7:36-40**

**Q. Do you notice a change of pace? Is Paul addressing a new issue now?**

A. Maybe, this is a fascinating passage. The Greek that the ESV translates as, "if his passions are strong," the NIV (1986) quite legitimately translates as, "if she is getting on in years". So it's hard to say whether Paul's saying, "if you're feeling horny, get married," or, "if your virgin (betrothed) is getting on in age, get married."

**Q. What's better in Paul's mind? Being married or being single?**

A. I'd err on the side of single but being married is not a sin.

**Q. What does the world say about this same issue?**

A. Probably some people say single is good because then you can do whatever YOU want. Where-as everything in the media seems more concerned with marriage or at least cohabiting.

**Q. What do you suppose Paul means by "in the Lord" in verse 39?**

A. The NIV translates it a lot simpler - "he must belong to the Lord." So if a woman is married to a non-believer and he dies, it's ok to get re-married but make sure this one's a believer. For me, this is a much clearer message than in the 2 Cor where Paul says that two people should not be "unequally yoked." I'm not convinced that's specifically addressing marriage (but can certainly be equated).

**Final: Can anyone sum up chapter 7? What's the point of what Paul's saying? Is it all just about "staying as you are" or is there more to it? Maybe it's about covenant relationship?**