**1 Corinthians 7-9**

Today’s Summary: If married, honor God by honoring your marriage. If single, honor God by honoring your single life. Not only is the grass not greener, but it is a sin to be ungrateful and to doubt God. For if you are single and you have prayed for a husband or wife, then God has heard and He WILL provide at the perfect time, in the perfect way, IF HIS WILL for your life and YOUR BEST. Trust that. Believe me, I am speaking to myself in this and know how very hard this can be to live out daily in perfect trust and faith. And if married, then pray for your marriage and know God has heard and He WILL provide at the perfect time, in the perfect way, but stay obedient and honor your marriage. God hates divorce and Paul is saying stay married, but just don’t check check out or check off the box, but instead honor the God of the impossible by spending your life dying to self and loving your spouse to health or repentance. You are Jesus to them.

Concerning Married Life

**7**Now for the matters you wrote about: “It is good for a man not to have sexual relations with a woman.” **2**But since sexual immorality is occurring, each man should have sexual relations with his own wife, and each woman with her own husband. **3**The husband should fulfill his marital duty to his wife, and likewise the wife to her husband. **4**The wife does not have authority over her own body but yields it to her husband. In the same way, the husband does not have authority over his own body but yields it to his wife. **5**Do not deprive each other except perhaps by mutual consent and for a time, so that you may devote yourselves to prayer. Then come together again so that Satan will not tempt you because of your lack of self-control. **6**I say this as a concession, not as a command. **7**I wish that all of you were as I am. But each of you has your own gift from God; one has this gift, another has that.

**8**Now to the unmarried and the widows I say: It is good for them to stay unmarried, as I do. **9**But if they cannot control themselves, they should marry, for it is better to marry than to burn with passion. **10**To the married I give this command (not I, but the Lord): A wife must not separate from her husband. **11**But if she does, she must remain unmarried or else be reconciled to her husband. And a husband must not divorce his wife.

**12**To the rest I say this (I, not the Lord): If any brother has a wife who is not a believer and she is willing to live with him, he must not divorce her. **13**And if a woman has a husband who is not a believer and he is willing to live with her, she must not divorce him. **14**For the unbelieving husband has been sanctified through his wife, and the unbelieving wife has been sanctified through her believing husband. Otherwise your children would be unclean, but as it is, they are holy.

**15**But if the unbeliever leaves, let it be so. The brother or the sister is not bound in such circumstances; God has called us to live in peace. **16**How do you know, wife, whether you will save your husband? Or, how do you know, husband, whether you will save your wife?

Concerning Change of Status

**17**Nevertheless, each person should live as a believer in whatever situation the Lord has assigned to them, just as God has called them. This is the rule I lay down in all the churches. **18**Was a man already circumcised when he was called? He should not become uncircumcised. Was a man uncircumcised when he was called? He should not be circumcised. **19**Circumcision is nothing and uncircumcision is nothing. Keeping God’s commands is what counts. **20**Each person should remain in the situation they were in when God called them.

**21**Were you a slave when you were called? Don’t let it trouble you - although if you can gain your freedom, do so. **22**For the one who was a slave when called to faith in the Lord is the Lord’s freed person; similarly, the one who was free when called is Christ’s slave. **23**You were bought at a price; do not become slaves of human beings. **24**Brothers and sisters, each person, as responsible to God, should remain in the situation they were in when God called them.

Concerning the Unmarried

**25**Now about virgins: I have no command from the Lord, but I give a judgment as one who by the Lord’s mercy is trustworthy. **26**Because of the present crisis, I think that it is good for a man to remain as he is. **27**Are you pledged to a woman? Do not seek to be released. Are you free from such a commitment? Do not look for a wife. **28**But if you do marry, you have not sinned; and if a virgin marries, she has not sinned. But those who marry will face many troubles in this life, and I want to spare you this.

**29**What I mean, brothers and sisters, is that the time is short. From now on those who have wives should live as if they do not; **30**those who mourn, as if they did not; those who are happy, as if they were not; those who buy something, as if it were not theirs to keep; **31**those who use the things of the world, as if not engrossed in them. For this world in its present form is passing away.

**32**I would like you to be free from concern. An unmarried man is concerned about the Lord’s affairs - how he can please the Lord. **33**But a married man is concerned about the affairs of this world - how he can please his wife - **34**and his interests are divided. An unmarried woman or virgin is concerned about the Lord’s affairs: Her aim is to be devoted to the Lord in both body and spirit. But a married woman is concerned about the affairs of this world - how she can please her husband. **35**I am saying this for your own good, not to restrict you, but that you may live in a right way in undivided devotion to the Lord.

**36**If anyone is worried that he might not be acting honorably toward the virgin he is engaged to, and if his passions are too strong and he feels he ought to marry, he should do as he wants. He is not sinning. They should get married. **37**But the man who has settled the matter in his own mind, who is under no compulsion but has control over his own will, and who has made up his mind not to marry the virgin -this man also does the right thing. **38**So then, he who marries the virgin does right, but he who does not marry her does better.

**39**A woman is bound to her husband as long as he lives. But if her husband dies, she is free to marry anyone she wishes, but he must belong to the Lord. **40**In my judgment, she is happier if she stays as she is - and I think that I too have the Spirit of God.

Concerning Food Sacrificed to Idols

**8**Now about food sacrificed to idols: We know that “We all possess knowledge.” But knowledge puffs up while love builds up. **2**Those who think they know something do not yet know as they ought to know. **3**But whoever loves God is known by God.

**4**So then, about eating food sacrificed to idols: We know that “An idol is nothing at all in the world” and that “There is no God but one.” **5**For even if there are so-called gods, whether in heaven or on earth (as indeed there are many “gods” and many “lords”), **6**yet for us there is but one God, the Father, from whom all things came and for whom we live; and there is but one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom all things came and through whom we live.

**7**But not everyone possesses this knowledge. Some people are still so accustomed to idols that when they eat sacrificial food they think of it as having been sacrificed to a god, and since their conscience is weak, it is defiled. **8**But food does not bring us near to God; we are no worse if we do not eat, and no better if we do.

**9**Be careful, however, that the exercise of your rights does not become a stumbling block to the weak. **10**For if someone with a weak conscience sees you, with all your knowledge, eating in an idol’s temple, won’t that person be emboldened to eat what is sacrificed to idols? **11**So this weak brother or sister, for whom Christ died, is destroyed by your knowledge. **12**When you sin against them in this way and wound their weak conscience, you sin against Christ. **13**Therefore, if what I eat causes my brother or sister to fall into sin, I will never eat meat again, so that I will not cause them to fall.

Paul’s Rights as an Apostle

**9**Am I not free? Am I not an apostle? Have I not seen Jesus our Lord? Are you not the result of my work in the Lord? **2**Even though I may not be an apostle to others, surely I am to you! For you are the seal of my apostleship in the Lord.

**3**This is my defense to those who sit in judgment on me. **4**Don’t we have the right to food and drink? **5**Don’t we have the right to take a believing wife along with us, as do the other apostles and the Lord’s brothers and Cephas? **6**Or is it only I and Barnabas who lack the right to not work for a living?

**7**Who serves as a soldier at his own expense? Who plants a vineyard and does not eat its grapes? Who tends a flock and does not drink the milk? **8**Do I say this merely on human authority? Doesn’t the Law say the same thing? **9**For it is written in the Law of Moses: “Do not muzzle an ox while it is treading out the grain.” Is it about oxen that God is concerned? **10**Surely he says this for us, doesn’t he? Yes, this was written for us, because whoever plows and threshes should be able to do so in the hope of sharing in the harvest. **11**If we have sown spiritual seed among you, is it too much if we reap a material harvest from you? **12**If others have this right of support from you, shouldn’t we have it all the more?

**But we did not use this right. On the contrary, we put up with anything rather than hinder the gospel of Christ.**

**13**Don’t you know that those who serve in the temple get their food from the temple, and that those who serve at the altar share in what is offered on the altar? **14**In the same way, the Lord has commanded that those who preach the gospel should receive their living from the gospel.

**15**But I have not used any of these rights. And I am not writing this in the hope that you will do such things for me, for I would rather die than allow anyone to deprive me of this boast. **16**For when I preach the gospel, I cannot boast, since I am compelled to preach. Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel! **17**If I preach voluntarily, I have a reward; if not voluntarily, I am simply discharging the trust committed to me. **18**What then is my reward? Just this: that in preaching the gospel I may offer it free of charge, and so not make full use of my rights as a preacher of the gospel.

Paul’s Use of His Freedom

**19Though I am free and belong to no one, I have made myself a slave to everyone, to win as many as possible.** **20**To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win the Jews. To those under the law I became like one under the law (though I myself am not under the law), so as to win those under the law. **21**To those not having the law I became like one not having the law (though I am not free from God’s law but am under Christ’s law), so as to win those not having the law. **22**To the weak I became weak, to win the weak. I have become all things to all people so that by all possible means I might save some. **23**I do all this for the sake of the gospel, that I may share in its blessings.

The Need for Self-Discipline

**24**Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize? Run in such a way as to get the prize. **25**Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last, but we do it to get a crown that will last forever. **26**Therefore I do not run like someone running aimlessly; I do not fight like a boxer beating the air. **27**No, I strike a blow to my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize.