

Living in Relationships

Key Verse: "I would that all men were even as I myself.

But every man hath his proper gift of God, one after this manner, and another after that."

—I Corinthians 7:7

Selected Scripture: I Corinthians 7:2-15

One of the most important relationships among mankind is the institution of marriage, and it is this that is the subject of the Apostle Paul's words in today's lesson. Paul realized, and saw firsthand, that as a result of man's fall from perfection, his ability to have successful relationships, including marriage, had been severely damaged by the effects of sin. Even in the church, Paul saw the struggles that some had with a proper appreciation of marriage and, in general, relationships between men and women. He saw that the results, in some cases, were serious violations of morality, and impure behavior. The church at Corinth was such that it had some of these problems, and Paul saw it necessary to give them needed

RELATIONSHIPS WITH OTHERS

Others are a vital part of life, for they provide a barometer of our most important relationship of all, that being with the Heavenly Father and his Son, Christ Jesus. Indeed, God instilled in his human creation the desire to have relationships one with another—to have love, care, and concern for one another—because that represented the desire he had to have fellowship with his creation.

counsel. Yet, far from simply picking on the Corinthian church and making them a spectacle, he was providing age-lasting lessons that all of the Lord's followers do well to follow, even in our day.

Paul states in this lesson that in marriage each man and woman should have only their own spouse, that husbands and wives should render "due benevolence" one to the other, and that they should neither depart from one another nor put each other away. (I Cor. 7:2,3,10,11) He takes the matter one step further in the Key Verse. After saying that he was now speaking his opinion, "not of commandment" (vs. 6), he expresses that it might be better that the Lord's people did not marry at all, and be 'even as I myself,' unmarried. (vs. 7) Paul meant by this statement that for those who had given themselves totally in consecration to the Lord, their betrothal was now to him, and marriage according to the flesh might be a hindrance to the carrying out of their consecration vows fully.

Paul, although here expressing that it may be best to be unmarried, nevertheless beautifully explains the symbol of marriage in his epistle to the Ephesians, where he likens it to our union with our heavenly bridegroom, Jesus. There he says, "Wives, be subject to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is the head of the church, He Himself being the Savior of the body. But as the church is subject to Christ, so also the wives ought to be to their husbands in everything. Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her; that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she should be holy and blameless. This mystery is great; but I am speaking with reference to Christ and the church."—Eph. 5:22-27,32 (*New American Standard Bible*) ■