

Better to Marry Than to Burn With Passion

by Tim Conway

This sermon delves into the discussion around 1 Corinthians 7, focusing on the issue of self-control, marriage, and sexual purity. It addresses the misconception that marriage is a solution for those struggling with sexual integrity and emphasizes the importance of discernment in choosing a godly spouse. The speaker highlights the distinction between having the gift of singleness and the gift of marriage, encouraging individuals to seek excellence in their future partners and to prioritize serving the Lord above all else.

Scripture: 1 Corinthians 7:9, 1 Corinthians 7:32, Proverbs 18:22, Matthew 19:10, 1 Corinthians 6:9, 1 Corinthians 6:18, 1 Corinthians 6:19, 1 Corinthians 7:26, Proverbs 12:4

Topics: "Self-Control", "Godly Relationships"

Description

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Transcript

I have two things that I want to deal with tonight, and I don't know. We'll see if we get to both of them. It's okay if we don't.

I'll just tell you what they are. One is actually something that I keep hearing being brought up and I keep hearing discussed among singles. In fact, just in the last few days, I have heard this text referred to and quoted, and because we have a lot of singles here, I want to touch on it.

I recognize that it is a topic that may not be suitable for the youngest people, but hopefully our conversation will be cloaked enough that it will be suitable. But I want us to look at 1 Corinthians 7. 1 Corinthians 7, I hear this quoted by singles, and I hear a case made from it sometimes by singles. And so I was discussing this with my wife the other day, and she said, that sounds like a good APT.

And I thought, you know what, maybe that's right. Maybe that should be something we look at the first time we all gather back together. But, 1 Corinthians 7. Now, I want to just hit the issue right off.

Let me get past all my bookmarks. Okay, 1 Corinthians 7. The passage that I am most concerned about is verse 9. But if they cannot exercise self-control, they should marry. For it is better to marry than to burn with passion.

And I guess, I'll just come right out and say, my big concern is that there are people who, including people within our own church, that basically look at that passage as though marriage is the solution if there's failure, maybe even massive failure, as far as sexual integrity and sexual purity. And that this would be a text to apply to that kind of failure, fall, sin, impurity in the life of the believer. And I guess I am hearing that text propagated, I don't want to say necessarily throughout the church, but I do hear it being used as a motivational verse for young men who probably would have to admit that they're failing miserably when it comes to sexual purity, and they latch onto this, and they basically become convinced that what is really needed in their life, if they're going to have victory, is that some girl comes along and is willing to marry them, and then they'll be rescued from all of their problems.

Anyways, what I want to do is, I just want to kind of follow Paul's talk, his words, and I want us to watch the case that he's building, and I want us to think, and I want us to talk, especially because we do have a lot of singles, typically, that come to this Bible study, and there are here tonight as well. So, I want us to talk through this. So, 1 Corinthians 7, does anybody here read the King James Bible? So, are you a KJV only guy? Okay.

I cut my teeth on the King James Bible for probably the better part of the first 10 years of my Christian life. One of the things that, in fact, read verse 1 from the KJV. 7? Yeah, 7 and 1. Now concerning the things whereof you wrote unto me, it is good for man not to touch a woman.

Okay. That can sound like, basically when I read the KJV, when I first began reading it, that can sound like Paul is saying that it's good not to touch a woman. And, in fact, if you look further on, you will find that he does commend singleness, so you might put that together that, well, he's saying it's good not to touch a woman.

I think that the newer translations are correct when they actually put, it is good for a man not to touch, the idea is have sexual relations with a woman, they put it in quotation marks. Because one of the things that you will recognize very quickly about 1 Corinthians is that Paul is responding to things that they wrote to him about. We could look at different examples, but I don't want to get sidetracked.

Basically, what they have done is they have wrote to Paul. And somebody in their midst is saying celibacy is the way to please God. It's good not to touch a woman sexually.

That is better in this Christian life. There's some advantage to that. And so what he is saying is, now concerning the matters about which you wrote, semicolon, and then here it is.

It's good, this is what they were asking about. This is what they were postulating. It's good for a man not to have sexual relations with a woman.

Now, that is something that has a tendency to appear religious and even righteous. Obviously, the Catholics have run with it. Now, we know this from 1 Timothy.

Demons tend to set that forth. But you can imagine how the Corinthians might have thought this. If you think about some of the most prominent men in the lives of the Corinthians, the Lord Jesus Christ was single.

The Apostle Paul was single. Paul himself said Barnabas was single. These guys may have looked at some of the key and principal men behind Christianity and recognized, hey, they're single.

Maybe there's something to that. I don't know where their thoughts were coming from. All we know is they had them.

All we know is they were writing to Paul and they were looking for clarity on these things. And so, here's how Paul answers. Because of the temptation to sexual immorality, so he's recognizing that's a reality.

Christians are not delivered from the temptation to sexual immorality. There is that reality. It is a real temptation.

It poses a threat. And because of that temptation, each man should have his own wife and each woman her own husband. Now, that almost seems like a universal statement right there.

If we just stopped right there. But we know Paul doesn't stop right there. But that's a very overarching statement.

Because of this temptation to sexual immorality, listen to the question they're asking. Is it good? And I think what was happening is not only did you have people asking the question who may have been single, but you probably also had people asking the question who were already married. Because one of the things that he's going to tell them is that they shouldn't be leaving spouses, even if those spouses are unbelievers.

And so I think the question really was there in their minds, where does marriage fit into Christianity? Where does sexual contact fit into Christianity? Is it necessarily good to avoid these things? And he says, no, here's the reality. There's a temptation to sexual immorality, so men should have their wives, women should have their husbands, and then here's the thing. If they're married, the husband should give his wife her conjugal rights, likewise the wife to her husband.

So basically what Paul is saying within the context of marriage, this is a good thing. Sexual relationships are a good thing, and in fact necessary because of the temptation to sexual immorality. Verse 4, the wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does.

Likewise, the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does. I mean, there's basically a mutual submission and surrender of the body in marriage. And then he says in verse 5, Do not deprive.

Well, if you look back up at 6.8, same words up there. Defraud. In fact, I believe your King James Bible says in verse 5, don't defraud.

So, deprive is one thing. Defraud is another thing. Are deprive and defraud synonyms? Anyway, you get the idea that deprive is probably a fitting word, but what does defraud bring in? What does that sound like? Deceit? I mean, maybe, but... Cheating.

Yeah, you're cheating somebody out of something. You're defrauding somebody. In other words, that's a part of marriage.

And if somebody is not surrendering themselves to their partner in marriage, they're cheating that person. Yeah, that's a good synonym for defraud. To cheat.

It doesn't mean they're cheating on them. It means they're cheating them out of what is their right in this conjugal relationship. Do not defraud one another or deprive one another, except perhaps by agreement, for a limited time, that you may devote yourselves to prayer.

So, I mean, Paul recognizes that there may be other priorities in life, that your walk with the Lord may take priority. There may be times, but you can tell. It's just for a limited time.

What Paul is really making a case for here is if you're married, this is a very good thing. This is a very protective thing. This is something that is necessary, lest you defraud the other person.

Perhaps, for a limited amount of time, you might stay apart, but then come together again, so that Satan may not tempt you because of your lack of self-control. Now, isn't that interesting? Your lack of self-control. So that Satan may not tempt you because of your lack of self-control.

And I find this very interesting because when it comes to the family situation, in Ephesians 4, we're told not to give place to the devil, and that is very closely tied to the statements about anger and not letting the sun go down on your anger. You know, we could apply that to the family. Unquestionably, we could tie that to the family.

Even though it's not specifically family-oriented in Ephesians 4, it is here. It's like if we're looking for one thing that God says very specifically will invite the devil into the family, it's right here. Now, what's interesting about this is Satan is involved.

Satan's active. And Satan's watching this. Satan is very, very involved in sexual immorality and in the sexual activity in marriage.

Think about what's perhaps said right before this. If you go back to 1 Corinthians 6, verse 12, all things are lawful for me. Now see, that's in quotation marks.

This seems to be something else that the Corinthians were saying. You know what they were saying? Everything's lawful. And food's meant for the stomach, and stomach for the food, verse 13.

Well, you know what they meant by that? You know what that saying alluded to? Food is meant for the stomach, stomach for food. In other words, well, God created our bodies for sex. It's like they're taking a very carnal statement and they're using it not just to describe food, they're using it to describe sexual activity.

You can see that. God will destroy both one and the other. The body is not meant for sexual immorality, but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body.

Why go back up there? Well, here's the thing. Satan, his great strategy when it comes to sex is to do everything he possibly can do to encourage sex outside marriage. But then he does everything to discourage sex from inside marriage.

And we see the two extremes here. Isn't this amazing? The same Corinthians are saying, food for the body, body for food. Let's go up to the temple and enjoy ourselves.

The same church is saying, we don't think we should probably remain married. Isn't that an amazing jump? Over here, Paul's having to rebuke these people for sex with prostitutes. In 7, he has to turn around and say, you need to have it within marriage.

I mean, you can see the two extremes. The satanic strategy here. Well, verse 6, now as a concession, not a command, I say this.

So, verses 1-5, he basically lays it out. Every man should have his wife, every wife should have her man. But he's going to give a concession.

It's not a command, but he's going to give his opinion here. And this is under inspiration. I wish that all were as I myself am.

But now notice this. Each has his own gift from God, one of one kind and one of another. Well, that's interesting.

We often talk about the gift of singleness. But did you notice here, he's not talking about a single gift. He's not talking simply about the gift of singleness.

He says each one has his own gift. That means every Christian has his own gift when it comes to singleness or not. Did you see that? One of one kind and one of another.

In other words, he's not talking about one kind of gift here. He's not simply talking about the gift of... I think oftentimes when gift is mentioned there, people immediately say, oh, a gift of singleness. I don't have the gift of singleness.

What he's talking about here is one person has one gift and another person has another gift. Why am I pointing that out? Well, because I'm afraid this happens. Somebody says, well, I don't have the gift of singleness.

Almost like that's justification for sexual immorality to view garbage on the Internet or somehow fall into some sexual immorality and say, well, I don't have the gift of singleness. And so, well, it's better for me to marry than burn with this passion and be all locked into this lack of self-control. But wait a second.

If you're a Christian, God says, you either have one gift or you have another gift. One of one kind. One of another.

I mean, it seems that both singleness and marriage are regarded as gifts. But what's my point here? Nobody is gifted for sexual immorality. That is not a gift.

That is not something God gives you. God doesn't give you sexual immorality. That is not a gift.

That is not God-given. That is what Paul is condemning over in 6.8. He is saying that if you join yourself with a prostitute, you become one body with her. He says, flee from this.

Every other sin a person commits is outside the body. This is sin. But the sexually immoral person sins against his own body.

Do you not know that your body is a temple to the Holy Spirit within you whom you have from God? You are not your own. You were bought with a price. This should be evident that no one is gifted for sexual immorality.

Now watch what he says. To the unmarried and the widows, obviously, he is not excluding widowers. And obviously, widows are unmarried.

But the unmarried is basically a term for those who were never married. They are single. The widower is somebody who was married, but they are no longer married.

And Paul says, I have a word for you. It is good to remain single as I am. Paul sees something good in it.

Now obviously, he is going to develop that. But if they cannot exercise self-control, they should marry. And Paul is not going to forbid marriage, and he doesn't forbid marriage anywhere through here.

Remember, forbidding to marry is a doctrine of demons. But he says, if they cannot... In other words, if you are single and you cannot exercise self-control, you should marry. For it's better to marry than to burn with passion.

Now, I want to jump in here and just point out. Let's attack this verse 9 a little bit. Now 8, it's to the unmarried and the widow.

Now, I have heard verse 9. I've heard it said that verse 9 is... I've actually heard it said that it's applied to somebody who has a fiancée or somebody that's already in a relationship or somebody that already has a betrothed. And I guess the only reason that I can imagine that people apply it that narrowly is because if you go down further in 1 Corinthians 7, you will find in verse 36, if anyone thinks that he is not behaving properly toward his betrothed, that's what the ESV says, but it's the word virgin. Toward his virgin.

If his passions are strong and it has to be, let him do as he wishes. Let them marry. It is no sin.

Now, this may be speaking about the guy or it may be speaking about the girl. If anyone thinks he is not... and this is the father of the virgin. If anyone thinks that the father is not behaving properly toward his virgin daughter, if her passions are strong and it has to be, let her do as he wishes or let the father do as he wishes.

Let them marry. It is no sin. Now, there's not really a textual issue here.

There's just an interpretive challenge. People are trying to figure out, well, who exactly... and one of the things is that in the original, it's hard to tell whether these pronouns ought to be male or whether they ought to be female. And so, anyways, if you go all the way down to 36, you can say, yes, there is a possibility that... now, it very likely is speaking about the father, but there is some reason to think that perhaps verse 38, so then he who marries his virgin does well.

He who refrains from marriage will do even better. So there is some question, is this actually the guy who's wanting to marry or is this the father? That's where the question comes in. But anyway, the reason that verse 9 would seem to resonate with people as possibly being... I've heard it expressed to me.

Somebody like Jim Elliot, when he was kind of engaged to Elizabeth Elliot and he was thinking about it and their relationship was growing, and I've heard it applied to situations and narrowly applied, and I've heard that if you try to take it more broadly than that, it's almost felt like it's a misuse of the verse. Well, honestly, I'm not going to go there for two reasons primarily. One, verse 36 is a long way away.

And I don't think when he states verse 9, he's expecting us to anticipate that all the way in verse 36, we're going to get some new light on the situation that's going to cause us to sit back and say, oh, he didn't mean everybody that's single. He just meant if you happen to be engaged or be in a betrothal situation or something like that. And you can see the ESV even runs with that idea of betrothal down there.

But I would say, wait, we need to apply verse 9 to the immediate context. And who would that be applied to? Verse 8, to the unmarried and the widows. I mean, that's to all of them.

That's who he's speaking to. That's what it says. To the unmarried and the widow.

To those who have never been married or those who have been married and their spouses died, he is saying if you're not able to stay single, then get married. It's better to marry than to burn with passion. Now, here's where I want to interject.

The idea of not exercising self-control or burning with passion, what I am hearing is this verse basically almost used as an excuse for sexual failure and that the person with the sexual failure is basically being given this right to marry here or even a command to marry or a strong encouragement to marry. That is such a contradictory kind of thinking. I would just say this.

Why do men... Let's think of a man. Let me give you an example. Here's a young man.

He gets married. Maybe when he was lost, he struggled with all manner of sexual sin, but God has saved him. And a battle ensues.

And over a year or two or three, God gives this young man victory in this area. Maybe he goes three years, four years, living basically in victory, and then he marries. Why did he marry? Well, he would say, I didn't have the gift of singleness.

And so basically what he's saying is, I didn't feel like I was in a place where I was gifted to exercise self-control for my entire life. You see, that would be an appropriate way to look at a man saying, I don't have the self-control to live my whole life. Well, wait.

You've lived the last three or four years with victory. Well, yes, but that doesn't equal the gift of singleness. And the man goes on and marries.

You see, if we're expected to believe that, well, this can just as well apply to a person who cannot exercise self-control, and the cannot is because they're not. They're viewing pornography all the time. They're falling into all sorts of sexual sin all the time.

I would just say this. Wait a second. Don't we need to stop and actually look at this from another angle? I have daughters.

I want my daughters to marry godly men. Should we expect that if a young lady is Christian and single, and a guy comes along and he's like, well, I can't exercise self-control. And what he means by it is he's miserably failing in sexual sin all the time.

He's viewing things on the Internet he ought not to be viewing. And he comes along and says, I can't exercise self-control and I need to marry you because it's better for me to marry you than to burn with passion. And basically, I'm burning and I'm failing and this thing has mastery over me.

Do you expect that girl to marry that guy? I mean, shouldn't we stop and think, wait, doesn't the Bible give us characteristics of a good husband? Doesn't the Bible give us characteristics of a good wife? Should I simply abandon all that? Should I come along as a guy if I was single and marry a girl who's miserably failing? She takes me to this passage, well, I can't exercise self-control, which, look at my life, I have no self-control. I mean, do you think Paul is basically saying here, well, girls, go look for a guy that can't

exercise self-control and is miserably failing all the time and you should just marry him to deliver him from this burn of passion that he has. Or do you think Paul would actually say to you, you ought to find a young man who's godly and who's Christ-like? You see, we don't want to misread this.

We don't want to assume here that somehow Paul is basically accepting this idea that men without the gift of singleness run around unable to exercise self-control and what he means by that is they're miserably failing and doing all the things which he's telling men to flee and women to flee from back in 6, 12 through 20. He calls it sin back there. 18, flee from sexual immorality.

Every other sin or every sin a person commits is outside the body, but this sin, the sin of the sexually immoral person sins against his own body. It's sin. I mean, I think that one of the things that we really have to be honest about is should we expect that young men and young women that are single in the church are going to look for people who lack self-control? And I was just expressing to somebody recently that in February, it will be 20 years since I was ordained, and I have racked my brain to think that in 20 years, I've been involved in marrying a lot of men and women.

And I've done pre-marriage counseling and I've known people's lives and I've been pastoring long enough that I have seen people married and then watched them over 5 years, 10 years, 15 years. And I have racked my brain to think of a single instance where the man had victory, pronounced victory in his life in this area, and then went and got married that the marriage hasn't been, you know, there's been problems, but it's been a good marriage. And I've racked my brain to think of any marriage that I can think of where the man lacked self-control right up until the time he got married that the marriage was good.

I mean, I've really tried to think. And one of the reasons that I've really racked my mind at this is because I have asked myself the question of verse 9 that when we as pastors come across somebody in the church who's miserably failing in this area, whether marriage is something God gives to rescue the person out of that situation. And what I have seen, and I'll say this, girls, if you marry a guy that does not have self-control in this area, I can't think of a single example where the marriage has turned out well.

Because that guy going into marriage with no self-control will continue in that marriage. Self-control is not something that just touches the sexual area of a man's life. It touches that man in many other areas.

And if he can't control his sexual appetites, I guarantee you, he can't control himself in other areas as well. And it will come out in numerous ways. It will come out and he can't control his money, he can't control his appetite, he can't control his anger.

And just because a man with sexually immoral lack of self-control gets married doesn't mean that that cures him. He may go on lusting after other women and searching the internet afterwards, which happens. And I've racked my mind because I've really tried to think pastorally, is this a way to rescue? And you know what I've become convinced? I've become convinced that if there's a young man or an older man who does not have his life together in this area, I would never encourage a Christian woman to marry a guy that does not have self-control in this area.

And I think to take verse 9 and to put a spin on it to say, well, I burn with passion and I'm failing all the time and so what God is telling me is to get married. Well, you can say that. You can believe that.

You can believe that God is telling you that. But I would ask you this, is God not telling the young woman to have wisdom and discernment in who she marries? And should she run right out and marry a guy who

lacks self-control in this area and expect that suddenly, magically, he's going to get fixed? See, I think what's happening is if that is the expectation that a guy has, then what that guy is also doing is he's expecting women to lay aside all discernment on who they select for a wife. Women should look not for the perfect guy, but for a good guy.

For a guy that it's evident that God's hand is on him. And I think one of the ways that you can tell if God's hand is on a guy is there will be significant success and victory in this area. I really believe it.

I really believe that it is... Listen, self-control is one of the fruits of the Spirit. And sexual immorality, the sexually immoral, don't inherit the kingdom. You know what you're basically doing if you're a guy and you think you can be sexually immoral and use this verse to try to convince yourself that you ought to get married? You basically are assuming that a girl ought to go ahead and marry you when actually what is consistently and habitually characteristic of your life is that which is characteristic of people who don't inherit the kingdom.

I would not recommend any of my daughters marry such a guy. Not ever. No way.

Why? Because fornicators and adulterers don't inherit the kingdom of heaven. And if a man does not have the ability to gouge that eye out or chop that hand off, what Jesus is saying is not just that he shouldn't have a wife, he's not going to have life. So, anyway, that's what I... I'm concerned that that text is being thrown around especially among the single young men in our church and especially among some that I know are not having so much success in being victorious in this area of their lives.

And I think that is a wrong twisting of that passage. Paul certainly is not, you can tell by the context, he certainly is not condoning in any way that people fail to glorify God in their body. They're bought with a price.

And so when he comes over here and he's talking about people that cannot exercise self-control, he's talking about people not who are miserably failing, but people who simply have a gift that is of one kind rather than the other. Never is one gifted for sexual immorality. The idea here is some people have gift of singleness.

Some people have the gift to be married. And the way you can tell if you don't have the gift of singleness is you're not content. You're not... Your level of passion, your level of desire, there's not an ability to remain content in that single state.

There's a temptation on your self-control that's strong. And I think that that is one of the greatest evidences that you don't have the gift of singleness is that you're not content. You're not at peace being single.

I don't believe that we ever want to take that passage and say, well, the indication that I don't have the gift of singleness is that I'm failing and falling and lacking self-control to the point of basically living a life of sexual immorality. Because it is 1 Corinthians 6. I mean, you go right back before this flea sexual immorality section in 6.12-20. If you go back to 1 Corinthians 6.9, do you not know the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality, nor thieves, nor the greedy, drunkards, revilers, swindlers, would inherit the kingdom of God.

Paul certainly is not condoning that the women in the church, the virgin women in the church, line up to marry men who fit that description. No way, no how does that what verse 9 of chapter 7 means. Any comments? Questions? Discussion? Your study of it, the to burn, you don't take in the context meaning to fall, but more is to be tempted? Well, to burn is obviously to feel the pull, to feel the temptation, to feel the, I mean, sexual temptation is an appetite, it's a draw, it's something that most every one of us have experienced, and I think that's what that burn is.

The burn is basically a way of describing, I'm not thinking that if somebody has a gift of singleness that that means that they're like just totally neutral. I don't think it necessarily means that. I don't think it necessarily means that a guy with the gift of singleness or a girl with the gift of singleness couldn't look at somebody of the opposite sex and be attracted to them, or even feel at times like marriage may have significant things to offer, but when it's all said and done, they can run.

I think the thing that we have to ask ourselves is this, because he goes on to develop this. The real issue is this, you know, if you're all still there, look what he says further down. He says, verse 26, I think that in view of the present distress, it's good for a person to remain as he is.

Are you bound to a wife? Do not seek to be free. Are you free from a wife? Do not seek a wife. If you do marry, you've not sinned.

And if a virgin marries, she is not sinned, yet those who marry will have worldly troubles, and I would spare you that. And so, this is what I mean, brothers. The appointed time has grown very short from now on.

Let those who have wives live as though they had none. Those who mourn, I mean, basically he's saying marriage may be a distraction. He goes on to say those who mourn.

I mean, sorrow may be a distraction. Joy may be a distraction. Commerce, the world.

I mean, the idea is don't let these things so dominate you that you're pulled away from the real objective in life. Because what's the point? Verse 32, I want you to be free from anxieties. The unmarried man is anxious about the things of the Lord, how to please the Lord.

This has to do with distractions. It has to do with anxieties. And I would just say this, when we're talking about the word burn, what it seems to indicate is this, that if I'm going to be more distracted and anxious being single, then get married.

But it doesn't mean that the gift of singleness, the gift of singleness is simply being able to serve the Lord better single. I think that's what the gift is, that God has so wired you, not that you couldn't possibly desire some things about marriage. Not that you couldn't possibly admire some things about those of the opposite sex.

Even at times maybe feel like the intimacy would be nice and that closeness would be nice and the communication would be nice. Other aspects of marriage, just having each other there and being able to depend on one another. There's lots of aspects about it that I'm sure could be appealing to somebody.

But I think in the end the issue is this, I can tell you as one who when God first saved me, I prayed that God would give me the gift of singleness. Because I wanted to serve Him. I wanted to serve Him.

But it was a distraction to me to be single. And I found that it was a bigger distraction to me. And it proved true.

That distraction was much better for me to be married than to remain single. I didn't have that gift. It's like the more I prayed for that gift, the less I recognized I had that gift.

But I think you want to measure it by the level of anxiety. I think that's where the burn comes in. I think the idea is, and remember that burn is associated with passion.

What's passion? Desire. I mean, if somebody is in a place where they are not more free and less anxious to serve the Lord single, well, if such desires exist in their life that they feel like they're going to face lesser anxiety, lesser distraction to get married, we have to think that Paul is talking about one has one kind of gift and one has another. And he clearly isn't talking about gifts of tongues and gifts of prophecy.

Right here he's very specifically talking about gifts of singleness or the gift of marriage. Now somebody could say, what about somebody who lives in that gray zone, who doesn't have the gift of singleness, but God also hasn't given them the gift of a spouse. And I recognize that there is such a state.

And I would just say this, that yes, there is a state. Many of God's people who get married are married after they have been a Christian for some time. And so there was a period of time in there that there are some that get saved when they're already married.

But there are a lot of people that get saved before they're married. And so there's this period in there where they want to be married, but they're not yet married. But the reality is, God puts lots of His people in that situation.

And we would say this, that certainly there's no circumstances that have overtaken any of God's people that God doesn't give sufficient grace and give a way out. Sin is never a necessity, ever. God always gives a way out.

And God gives grace. And God gives grace for the situation. And He knows the situation.

And He knows how long He intends to put people in that situation who don't have the gift of singleness, but before they get the gift of a spouse, He designs that. And for some it's shorter, and for some it's longer. But I'll tell you this, that if a guy is a professing Christian, or if a girl is a professing Christian, and they come along, and they're miserably failing in the area of sexual immorality, that is not a way to shorten that period of time.

Because I'd let James speak for himself, but I will never encourage any young lady to marry a man who is failing in this area. I will not encourage that. And I think most young ladies would not be open to that possibility.

I mean, James, you can comment on the same page. Even the statement you made earlier about trying to think about what couple got married, and it was already an issue in the husband's life, and it got resolved. And the only one I could think of was one that got resolved because the husband got converted.

Years into the marriage. And that's what stopped the sexual sin against his wife. He wasn't really converted.

Well, and the reality is that back up in 1 Corinthians 6-9, when you find that people who basically have a life that's characterized by sexual immorality, that's not the kind of person that a godly girl should be desiring to find in a husband. Because what the guy is doing is he is demonstrating a life that makes it very questionable whether he knows the Lord. And certainly, if there's any nightmare that facing a girl, it's not just marrying a guy and then find out that he lacks self-control when it comes to sex.

It's becoming face-to-face with, I married a lost guy. I mean, I'm thinking that whether you're a guy or a girl, I'm thinking that that's one of the things that you would want to ascertain more than anything else. That if you're marrying, you're marrying somebody who's walking with the Lord and talking with the Lord and growing in the Lord and showing evidences that the Spirit of God, that the fruit of the Spirit is being manifest in this person's life.

Any other comments on that? I was saved when I was 25, got married right before I turned 29. Oh, I felt like I experienced miraculous demonstrations of the grace of God in my life. I mean, bitter, all-out battle, but definite, definite help and definite victory.

I mean, marked. Very manifest. How would you counsel a single lady who's considering that throughout his life he's had victory, and then in the year before he was interested in her, hypothetically speaking, he fell? Like, how would you counsel that young lady who's trying to consider a guy who fell in the last year? When you say he fell, are you talking a one-time thing or are you talking he is now in a habitual state? One-time.

Yeah, I mean, one-time is Davidic, actually, in nature. One-time, you know, people can fall. What I'm looking for is a pattern.

What I'm looking for is habitual. Because think with me, when Scripture calls somebody a liar or Scripture calls somebody sexually immoral, the reality is that Scripture calls David a man after God's own heart. Scripture does not call David... I mean, he doesn't get a label put on him.

So, in the New Testament, when you find people called sexually immoral, that's something that's habitual in their life. I mean, if there's a one-time fall or failure, I think we're talking something different. But, you know, that would be an observation that I would make pastorally.

But, you know, the girl is the one considering marrying the guy. If she gets a monster, she gets him. If she gets a lost man, she gets him.

If she gets a miserable husband, if she gets a guy that lacks self-control, she gets him. If she gets a wonderful husband, she gets him. If she gets a guy who fell once and God used it to really humble him, she gets that.

And see, sometimes that happens. I mean, I know of maybe several situations where it seems like God may have let His children fall in order to kill a bigger sin like pride or self-righteousness. And so you'd want to look at that.

I mean, how did the person come out of that? How did they process what happened? How did they process how God dealt with them? Because I really do think God will let His children fall on their face in certain areas if they're too proud, too self-righteous. Any other... So it says, I think that in view of the present distress, it's good for a person to remain as he is. Are you bound to wife? Do not seek to be free.

Are you free from wife? Do not seek. And I just don't know how to necessarily reconcile that with that verse in Proverbs that says, he who finds a wife, finds a good thing. It's like you're searching for a very precious good thing.

Yeah, but I don't think that has to be any contradiction. I would say this, that if your gift is not the gift of singleness, then find a good wife. Don't find a crummy one.

And I would say that to the girls. That's my point about stressing that text. Girls, if you don't have the gift of singleness, don't look for a crummy guy that has no victory in this area.

Don't look for that. Look for an excellent husband. Just like the guy is pressed in the Proverbs to look for an excellent wife.

An excellent wife, who can find? It means that they're rare. Look for them. You will be happy to find an excellent wife or an excellent husband.

But, that's if you're going to go for the wife. If you listen to Paul's concession, he is basically saying, look, if you are unmarried or you are a widow, and you can be like I am, he says, I commend it, because you will not be distracted. And he says, if you get married, you are going to face distractions.

He said the unmarried man, the unmarried woman, they are more fully able to devote themselves to pleasing the Lord. And that's the issue. And he says that some people have that gift.

And Jesus Himself said, you know, the disciples said, well, it's better not to marry then. And He says, well, not everybody can accept that saying. He said there are some who can, but many who can't.

And so, I think that's the issue. If a person can stay single, I think the last thing we want to do is propagate this idea in our churches that single people are not complete until they're married. Like they're always living in this limbo land until they get married.

We don't want to do that. Not the way Paul speaks. What I would say to young people is consider singleness.

If you consider it and you say, you know what, I can do that, and I can be content, that doesn't mean that there aren't some desires to get married, but by and large, I am able to function without undue anxieties, and stay single. And if you can do that, then Paul's saying, there can be some advantages to your overall devotedness to the Lord. That's what he's saying.

But if you don't have that gift, Paul repeatedly says, if you marry, you're not sinning. As much as he's trying to say, I wish you all could stay like I am, he repeatedly says, I'm not going to be like the demons. I'm not going to tell you you can't marry.

You can marry. And if you decide to marry, it's good. But I would just say this to the single, that if you do decide to marry, yes, look for an excellent wife.

Look for an excellent husband.

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/tim-conway/better-to-marry-than-to-burn-with-passion/>

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