

1 Corinthians - Commentaries by Nicolas Simon

That It May Be Well With Thee: Dating And Marriage, Decision Not to Marry, A (7:7-9,33-35)

“For 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 say therefore to the unmarried and widows, It is good for them if they abide even as I. But if they cannot contain, let them marry: for it is better to marry than to burn” (1 Cor. 7:7-9). It is not for everyone to marry. For some this may be a conscious decision, for others, a circumstance in which they find themselves. The Apostle Paul never married that we know of, and it gave him great liberty in his ministry. He suffered many things which he would never have asked a wife to endure. Neither marriage nor celibacy is a commandment; the religious systems of men have perverted that which is of God. “Forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats, which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth” (1 Tim. 4:3).

There are advantages in remaining single; for example, one is not bound by his or her concern for their spouse. Scripture does not anticipate this in a selfish way, but as a means to serve the Lord. This decision is not limited to men, but it may also be the choice of a woman. “He that is married careth for the things that are of the world, how he may please his wife. There is difference also between a wife and a virgin. The unmarried woman careth for the things of the Lord, that she may be holy both in body and in spirit: but she that is married careth for the things of the world, how she may please her husband. And this I speak for your own profit; not that I may cast a snare upon you, but for that which is comely, and that ye may attend upon the Lord without distraction” (1 Cor. 7:33-35). Marriage is not worldly, but it is for this world; it is only for this time and not for eternity.

Keep in mind, however, that having a wife does not preclude one from ministry. Peter was a married man: “Have we not power to lead about a sister, a wife, as well as other apostles, and as the brethren of the Lord, and Cephas [Peter]?” (1 Cor. 9:5). We have another beautiful example in Aquila and Priscilla.

For many who find themselves single, it is not by choice. This may prove to be a real trial. Life appears to be slipping by them and they have yet to meet the right one. Should any find themselves in this situation, or even if they believe it to be their choice, I would encourage them to be before the Lord about it. Chafing about one's lot in life never leads to a happy spirit. The Lord has plans for you. Perhaps He doesn't wish for you to remain single for the rest of your life, nevertheless, the time is not right. “Delight thyself also in the Lord; and He shall give thee the desires of thine heart. Commit thy way unto the Lord; trust also in Him; and He shall bring it to pass” (Psa. 37:4-5). In the meanwhile, keep active and occupied. Reach out to others, travel, be a testimony for the Lord in whatever position He places you. I do not make light of this circumstance, but to be content in whatever state we are found is a happy condition; to be married and miserable is a terrible trial.

That It May Be Well With Thee: Dating And Marriage, Final Thoughts (7:28)

Perhaps by this point, you are mightily discouraged. How will I ever find a suitable companion? It is not my desire to discourage, but rather, “that it may be well with thee” (Ruth 3:1). Keep in mind: you won't find a perfect spouse. We are not perfect — yes, in Christ we are — but until we depart this scene, the flesh is still very much in us.

Even if one were to execute everything flawlessly, we should not expect a trouble-free marriage. “If thou marry, thou hast not sinned; and if a virgin marry, she hath not sinned. Nevertheless such shall have trouble in the flesh” (1 Cor. 7:28). A marriage is something we make. Life doesn't end with the last page of the novel, or when the credits roll; that's just the beginning. In some ways the easy part is over and the real challenges lie ahead. Unless you've prayed about this, unless you've thought this through, unless you've planned together for this, and sought the advice of others, you are going to be in for some unfortunate surprises. It's a little late to seek God's direction after marriage. Yes, we pray together in marriage, but if we've waited until then, we've waited too long. Prayer is not a substitute for poor planning; prayer is an integral part of the whole process. Start praying now.

A good marriage is an investment, but it will pay rich dividends. It is an investment in time, in communication, and, most importantly, spiritual growth together. Providing Christ is the center of the relationship, and there is a sense of love and good will one toward the other, differences and difficulties can be overcome.