

Interpretation of 1
corinthians 7 1 16
religion essay



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The most important law of biblical Hermeneutics is that the Bible should be interpreted literally. Literal Bible interpretation means you should understand the Bible in its normal plain meaning. The Bible says what it means and means what it says. Many make the mistake of trying to read between the lines and come up with the meanings for Scriptures that are not truly in the text. Yes, of course, there are some spiritual truths behind the plain meanings of Scripture. That does not mean that every Scripture has a hidden spiritual truth, or that it should be our goal to find all such spiritual truths. We will be looking at the purpose and meaning of using Biblical Hermeneutics.

1. 1. WORDS AND GRAMMAR

a) The phrase 'to touch a woman' (NASB) probably means 'to have sexual relations with a woman' (ESV), but some translations render it 'to marry' (NIV). Explain how the meaning of verses 1-7 depends on the meaning assigned 'to touch a woman'.

1Paul's first epistle to the Corinthians is a rich, intriguing chapter that has been abused and misunderstood. The chapter is just as timely today as when Paul penned it because it addresses matters of the avoidance of fornication and a number of marital concerns. The chapter naturally lends itself to seven topic divisions. Verses 1-7 speak about the rights and duties of the married. It would appear that the present distress may have influenced Paul's statement, "it is good for a man not to touch a woman". One purpose of marriage is to avoid fornication (verse 2). Marriage involves duties, even conjugal rights and responsibilities. Paul expresses this in such language as,

“ The wife hath not power of her own body, but the husband...” (verse 4). Many divorces could have been avoided were it not for the selfish attitude so many husbands and wives have had. In view of the possibility of sexual temptation, Paul says, “ Defraud you not one the other....” (verse 5). Many marriages have been destroyed because of lack of caution. Paul realized there can be different circumstances and people; hence, he allowed some choice in the matter of defraud you not (verse 5 and 6). Paul wrote by inspiration and is not denying this in verse 6. Paul used himself as an example of continence or self-control and desired all were as he (verse 7). So “ to touch a woman” is euphuism for a sexual relationship which is a metonymy for marriage. The Scripture uses the word “ touch” to refer to a union such as marriage. 2 Corinthians 6: 14-17 uses touch in this way (Neilsen, 2006).

b) Examine all 25 occurrences of this word in the New Testament and place each under the appropriate heading. Conclude with a paragraph discussing the meaning of porneia in 1 Cor. 7: 2 (that is, which of the above definitions fits context best, and why).

Premarital sex: ‘ fornication’

Matt. 5: 32 divorces his wife, except for the reason of unchastity, makes her commit adultery.

1 Cor. 5: 1 It is actually reported that there is immorality among you, and immorality of such a kind as does not.

1 Cor. 6: 18 Flee immorality. Every other sin that a man commits.

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1 Thess. 4: 3 that is, that you abstain from sexual immorality.

Extramarital sex: ' adultery'

Matt. 19: 9 whoever divorces his wife, except for immorality, and marries another woman commits adultery.

Heb 13: 4 Marriage is honourable among all, and the bed undefiled; but fornicators and adulterers God will judge.

Sex with (temple) prostitutes

1 Cor. 7: 2 But because of immoralities, each man is to have his own.

Rev. 2: 21 does not want to repent of her immorality.

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Metaphorically, idolatry as unfaithfulness to God

Matt, 15: 19 the heart come evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, slanders.

Mark. 7: 21 heart of men, proceed the evil thoughts, fornications, thefts, murders, adulteries.

John 8: 41 said to Him, " We were not born of fornication, we have one Father: God.

Acts 15: 20 things contaminated by idols and from fornication and from what is strangled.

Acts 15: 29 and from things strangled and from fornication, if you keep yourselves free from.

Acts 21: 25 blood and from what is strangled and from fornication.

2 Cor. 12: 21 and not repented of the impurity, immorality and sensuality which they have practiced.

Gal. 5: 19 the flesh are evident, which are: immorality, impurity, sensuality.

Eph. 5: 3 But immorality or any impurity or greed must.

Col. 3: 5 your earthly body as dead to immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed.

Rev. 9: 21 of their sorceries nor their immorality nor their thefts.

Rev. 14: 8 wine of the passion of her immorality.

Rev. 17: 2 made drunk with the wine of her immorality.

Rev. 17: 4 abominations and of the unclean things of her immorality.

3Rev. 18: 3 wine of the passion of her immorality, and the kings of the earth.

Rev. 19: 2 harlot who was corrupting the earth with her immorality, and He has avenged the blood (Sanders, 2009).

Porneia is the New Testament word used by Jesus and the apostles to describe serious sexual offenses. Porneia was the only sexual offense that the church in Jerusalem required new Christians to avoid. Some fornication is

not porneia and some porneia is not fornication. An example is 1 Thessalonians 4: 3 NIV, which is the clearest scriptural prohibition against porneia. “ For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that we should abstain from fornication (Greek porneia)” (McGinnes, 2008).

Conduct an exhaustive word study of the word the NIV translates ‘ deprive’ in verse 5. Discuss its usage in the New Testament and its connotations in 1 Cor. 7: 5.

Depriving one’s spouse without consent is fraud. Paul gives four stipulations for couples who wish to abstain from sexual relations.

It must be for a designated period of time.

It must be mutually agreed upon before hand.

It must be for the purpose of devoting oneself to fasting and prayer.

At the end of this period the couples must resume sexual relations.

4This is to obstruct Satan’s temptations because of their lack of self control. Deprive in Greek “ apostereo” (Strong’s #G650) means “ to deprive, wrong, or defraud another of what belongs to him”. Thus sex between husband and wife is a right and responsibility which must not be withheld “ except by mutual consent” because the spouse’s body does not belong to him or her alone but also to his or her spouse (1 Corinthians 7: 5, NIV). So that Satan will not tempt you because of your lack of self-control. Paul is not against sex within marriage, he is recognizing that the sex drive can lead to fornication or adultery if it is not satisfied within marriage because there has not been

sufficient development of self-control before marriage (1 Corinthians 7: 9, NIV). Even though married, a spouse may still fall to Satan's temptation because the spouse has not developed self-control or has been deprived in marriage (Cleveland, 2005).

Draw a block diagram representing the semantic relationships between the propositions in 1 Cor. 7: 1-7 (Smith, 2009).

1 Corinthians 7: 1-7

1 Now concerning the things of which you wrote on: HEAD

1a It is good for a man not to touch a woman Condition

2a Nevertheless, because of sexual immorality Negative

2b let each man have his own wife Answer

and let each woman have her own husband

3a Let the husband render to his wife the affection due her and Explanation

likewise also the wife to her husband

4a The wife does not have authority over her own body, but the Explanation

husband does. And like wise the husband does not have

authority over his own body, but the wife does

5a Do not deprive one another except with consent for a Condition

time, that you may give yourselves to fasting and prayer

5b and come together again so that Satan does not tempt you Negative

5c because of your lack of self-control Ground

6a But I say this as a concession, not as a commandment Concessive

7a For I wish that all men were even as I myself Comparison

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7b But each one has his own gift from God, one in this manner Concessive

and another in that

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LITERARY CONTEXT AND STRUCTURE

a) Which words at the beginning of 1 Cor. 7 mark this as the beginning of a new section of the letter? Where else do these words occur in 1 Cor., and what role do they play in the structure of the letter as whole? Based on your analysis, where does the section beginning in 7: 1 end?

Paul begins with these words: “ Now concerning the things about which you wrote, it is good for a man not to touch a woman”. Chapter 7 begins a new section of 1 Corinthians. The words, “ Now concerning” prepare the reader for Paul’s response to the Corinthians’ question. In the first six chapters of this letter, Paul has been dealing with sinful struggles in the life of the church in Corinth that he had heard about through Chloe’s people. But now, beginning in 7: 1, Paul is going to respond to a whole series of questions that were addressed to him in a letter from the leadership of the church in Corinth. They were questions about practical issues like marriage, divorce, singleness, food offered to idols, spiritual gifts and public worship, what happens to our bodies when we die and finally, a concern about an offering to be taken for some believers in Jerusalem who were in poverty. Paul will devote the rest of this letter to answering these questions. In 7: 2, Paul gives the basic command to have sexual relations with your spouse. “ Let each

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man live sexually with his wife, and let each wife live sexually with her husband". The Lord's provision for sexual immorality is to get married and have frequent sex. Marriage is the answer to immorality of all kinds. Satisfy and protect your spouse. In 7: 3, he writes, " The husband must fulfill his duty to his wife, and likewise also the wife to her husband". He says it is the husband's duty to fulfill his wife. Our passage closes in 7: 5 with these potent words: " Stop depriving one another, except by agreement for a time, so that you may devote yourselves to prayer, and come together again so that Satan will not tempt you because of your lack of self-control" (Bible. org, nd).

8b) If you were to preach from 1 Cor. 7: 1-16, your sermon would need four sections. What would those four sections be (indicate the topic and verses of each). What phrases does Paul use to indicate the four sections?

" Concerning the things about which you wrote" (1 Corinthians 7: 1, NIV). Paul begins answering specific questions the Corinthians asked him in a letter they wrote.

To Christians who are married - Concerning Sexual purity within the marriage (1 Corinthians 7: 2-7, NIV). Paul was discussing sexual immorality.

To Unmarried and Widowed believers - Concerning the possibility of marriage (1 Corinthians 7: 8-9, NIV). Paul now directly addresses believers who were unmarried and those who have been married but whose spouse had died.

To Married believers - Concerning Divorce and remarriage (1 Corinthians 7: 10-11, NIV). Paul directly addresses married Christians, and he discusses the issue of divorce and remarriage.

To Mixed marriages - Concerning Separation & Divorce (1 Corinthians 7: 12-16, NIV). Some of the believers in Corinth had come to faith in Christ after they were already married and some of their marriage partners had not trusted Christ (Lewis, 2007).

c) What subjects does Paul deal with in 1 Cor. 5: 1-3 and 6: 12-21? Why do you think he placed his answer to their questions about sex and marriage immediately after chapters 5 and 6?

In chapters 5 and 6, Paul calls attention to two other problems plaguing the church: immorality and lawsuits. Chapter 5 is not actually about the immorality of one church member, as much as it is about the pride and passivity of the entire church in response to this sinner. It is not until the end of chapter 6 (verses 12-20) that Paul exposes the evil of immorality. We see then that chapters 5 and 6 are a unit. Chapter 5 introduces the matter of immorality and the obligation of the church to exercise discipline. Chapter 6 takes up the issue of Christians taking each other to law courts (verses 1-11), and then concludes with Paul's teaching on immorality. Paul informs the Corinthians that God now indwells His temple, the church. Chapters 7 discuss issues that the Corinthians themselves had brought up in some letter mentioned in 7: 1. Paul placed his answers in Chapter 7 to address these issues in public for example the issues about worship, spiritual gifts and doctrinal controversies (Deffinbauch, nd).

What figure of speech does Paul use in verses 3-4? What is the literal meaning of the figure of speech? Why did he use this figure of speech?

“ For I indeed, as absent in body but present in spirit”. What a great excuse Paul has for not getting involved in this ugly situation in Corinth. After all, he is far removed. What can he do? Well for one thing, Paul can write a letter. For another, he can act even from a distance. Paul describes the discipline process in verses 3-5 and he speaks of himself as an active participant. He thereby sets the example and hopes the Corinthians will follow. Paul may be physically absent, but he is never spiritually absent. He not only writes to them, but he makes every effort to obtain reports of how they are coming along. When word of problems in Corinth reaches Paul, he does not allow his absence to keep him from doing the right thing. He is with these saints in spirit and so while the Corinthians have not yet done anything to correct the situation, Paul informs them that he has taken action (Deffinbauch, nd).

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HISTORICAL-CULTURAL CONTEXT

a) It is likely that an early form of Gnosticism, a false teaching that threatened the early church, had taken root in Corinth. Explain how Gnostic beliefs would account for two sexual abuses taking place in the Corinthian church, namely, temple prostitution (1 Cor. 6: 12-21) and celibate marriage (1 Cor. 7: 1-5)?

The Greeks always looked down on the body. There was a proverbial saying, "The body is a tomb". Epictetus said, "I am a poor soul shackled to a corpse". Apparently some men within Corinth are going to prostitutes and are arguing for the right to do so. Being people of the Spirit, they imply, has moved them to a higher plane, the realm of the spirit, where they are unaffected by behaviour that has merely to do with the body. So Paul proceeds from the affirmation to an attack on this theological justification. As before, the gospel itself is at stake, not simply the resolution of an ethical question. The Corinthian pneumatics understanding of spirituality has allowed them both a false view of freedom and of the body, from which basis they have argued that going to prostitutes is permissible because the body doesn't matter. The Corinthians had not understood the nature of sexual intercourse or the nature of Christian conversion. Evidently the Corinthians had concluded that since they were spiritual they did not need to continue to

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have sexual relations as husband and wife. Another less probable situation, I think, is that there were some married Christians in the church who were overreacting to the immorality in Corinth by abstaining from sexual relations with their mates (Constable, 2007).

In a male-dominated culture, Paul's statements in verses 2-4 must have sounded quite radical. Why?

12 Paul turns to problems about marriage raised by some of the Corinthians. He is compelled to deal with the specific issue of sexuality, but Paul broadens the horizon to include the total spectrum of male/female relationships. A careful reading of the chapter shows that in almost every instance Paul addresses himself explicitly to both men and women in order to show that each sex has the same freedom and the same responsibility. On all the issues dealt with woman and man are accountable in equal ways. Paul goes out of his way to demonstrate the equality of women in all these situations. Paul's preference for the single state arises neither out of a sense of the inferiority of women nor out of a moral judgment on sexuality. Instead it is a function of his vision that the upbuilding of the church be the decisive reality to which the believer commits himself or herself (Toews, 1980).

In Matthew 5: 31-32 Jesus talks about men divorcing their wives, but in 1 Corinthians 7: 10-16 Paul warns both men and women not to divorce their partners. What cultural difference between Jerusalem and Corinthian accounts for Paul including women in his warning?

I think it is helpful to know some historical background of the city of Corinth.

Corinth was one of the most strategically located cities in the ancient world.
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The Temple of Aphrodite on Acrocorinth was unique in Greece. Its priestesses were more than a thousand sacred slaves, who engaged in prostitution. Its wealth was derived from its commercial traffic by sea and land, its pottery and brass industries and its importance as the capital of Achaia. It would be hard to live a sexually pure life and follow the high moral ethics taught in the Bible in the social environment of Corinth. Paul planted Christianity in the city of Corinth according to Acts 18: 1-18. Some time later he wrote what is now called I Corinthians with the primary purpose to deal with some problems that had been brought to his attention from a Christian woman by the name of Chloe and also remind the church that they should help the poor saints living in Jerusalem (1 Corinthians 16: 2, NIV). The church was primarily made up of Gentiles because of the reference of many of them being converted from idolatry (1 Corinthians 12: 2, NIV). We also know that the apostle Paul was able to convert some Jewish people to Christ (Waterbury Church, nd).

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1. 4. THEOLOGICAL CONTEXT

Conduct a detailed study of everything Jesus taught about sex, marriage, divorce and remarriage. Discuss how Jesus' teaching confirms, clarifies or completes what Paul teaches in 1 Cor. 7: 1-16. These are the passages in the gospels you should examine:

15 Jesus gave only one reason for divorce. If there is a divorce for any cause other than fornication and one or both spouses remarry it is not recognized by God. In the eyes of God they are still married to one another. In the case of remarriage each act of sex would constitute adultery as this would be sex with someone other than a spouse. The word adultery in the Greek text is in the present tense denoting continuous action, thus both would be "living in adultery". If a spouse commits fornication the innocent party has a scriptural right to divorce and remarry. The guilty party can never remarry. If a person or a couple who have an unlawful divorce in their background wanted to become Christians they must break up their marriage as a part of repentance. Upon breaking up they could return to their first spouse but if this is not possible they must remain single and never remarry. We teach one cannot put away a spouse unless he or she has committed fornication. If there is no fornication then there can be no divorce even if a spouse goes through the process of having it legalized. What we fail to recognize is that <https://assignbuster.com/interpretation-of-1-corinthians-7-1-16-religion-essay/>

when Jesus said, "What God has joined together let not man put as under," he is not saying "What God has joined together is impossible to put as under". God hates divorce, but this does not mean he refuses to recognize divorce when it occurs. When Jesus said, "Who ever shall put away his wife," he recognized divorce as a fact of life. Nowhere does he teach that divorce is not a divorce. Nowhere does the Bible speak of an unscriptural divorce. We say that Matthew 19: 9 teaches that a divorced person does not actually marry a second spouse, but is still married to the first spouse in the eyes of God. Just as it is impossible to divorce, so it is impossible to marry again. Yet, nowhere do the scriptures say a divorced person can never marry a second spouse. The scriptures teach just the opposite. When Jesus talked with the Samaritan woman he told her she had had five husbands. Unless all of them died she must have been divorced at times. Each time she remarried it was considered marriage by the Lord for he told her she had had five husbands. They would not have been husbands if she were not married to them. Jesus said the man she was presently living with was not her husband. Why? She had never been married to him. Jesus did not tell her she had only been married one time, to the first husband. Thus, in the eyes of the Lord this woman was married five times. Our teaching that one cannot remarry is not in harmony with what Jesus taught. Jesus said that lust is adultery in Matthew 5: 27, 28. The reason "adultery" can be used in all these different ways is because one of the meanings of adultery is that of unfaithfulness. Unfaithfulness is involved in all these things. With this definition in mind look at Matthew 5: 31-32. Jesus says that divorce is adultery. He says that by putting away a wife the husband causes her to commit adultery. We have taught that the innocent party in a divorce can remarry but the guilty can

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never remarry. When Jesus said, “ except for fornication” he was not emphasizing the “ scriptural right” to divorce. Rather he is pointing out who the guilty party is and who it is that causes the divorce. He is saying that if you put away your spouse other than for fornication then you are guilty of unfaithfulness to your marriage vows. Jesus then is pointing a finger at Jewish men who were the guilty party rather than the woman who had been faithful. Jesus does not say a guilty party can never remarry. He can and did as we have already observed in the conversation Jesus had with the Samaritan woman. If the remarried person wants to become a Christian or if he is already one then he needs to understand that he must take his vows seriously and keep them until death do us part. Christ calls upon Christians to recognize the seriousness of the marriage vows (Sanders, nd).

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1. 5. SUMMARY AND APPLICATION

a) Summarise the major teaching in 1 Cor. 7: 1-16.

The Corinthians had written to Paul, asking him several questions relating to the Christian life and problems in the church. The first question was whether it was good to be married. Paul answers this and other questions in the

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remainder of this letter. The city had a reputation even among heathens for sexual immorality and religious prostitution. The Corinthians needed special, specific instructions because of their culture's immoral standards. Sexual temptations are difficult to withstand because they appeal to the normal and nature's desires that God has given us. The Corinthian church was in turmoil because of the immorality of the culture around them. Some Greeks, in rejecting immorality, rejected sex and marriage altogether. The Corinthian Christians wondered if this was what they should do also, so they asked Paul. Paul's command about the permanence of marriage comes from the Old Testament and from Jesus. Paul ranked the command above the suggestion because one is an eternal principle while the other is a specific application. Paul was a man of God, an apostle and he had the mind of Christ. Because of their desire to serve Christ, some people in the Corinthian Church thought they ought to divorce their heathen spouses and marry Christians. But Paul affirmed the marriage commitment. Paul's chief purpose in writing this was to urge the married couples to seek unity, not separation (Tyndale House Publishers, 1996).

b) Discuss some practical applications of the principles in 1 Cor 7: 1-16 for Christians in your cultural context.

18 Marriage provides God's way to satisfy these natural sexual desires and to strengthen the partners against temptation. Married couples have the responsibility to care for each other, therefore, husbands and wives should not withhold themselves sexually from one another, but should fulfill each other's needs and desires. If you are married, don't seek to be single. If you are single, don't seek to be married. Spiritually, our bodies belong to God
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when we become Christians because Jesus Christ bought us by paying the price to release us from sin. Physically, our bodies belong to our spouses because God designed marriage so that, through union of husband and wife, the two become one. Both marriage and singleness are gifts from God. One is not morally better than the other and both are valuable to accomplishing God's purposes. Sexual pressure is not the best motive for getting married, but it is better to marry the right person than to burn with passion. God's ideal is for marriages to stay together even when one spouse is not a believer. The Christian spouse should try to win the other to Christ. It would be easy to rationalize leaving, however, Paul makes a strong case for staying with the unbelieving spouse and being a positive influence on the marriage. God regards the marriage as sanctified by the presence of one Christian spouse. The Christian spouse must try to get along with the unbelieving Christian spouse. Marriage is not only sacred, it is the closest intimacy which a man and a woman sustain to each other while robed in the flesh! There are certain privileges which marriage allows that are not right when participated in elsewhere. So many marriages are a mess because the spouses are not paying to each other what they owe. We are not to be concerned with our rights. No one should ever say, " She is not paying me what she owes me". As a matter of fact, a believer doesn't have rights. He simply has responsibilities. This puts the emphasis on the rights of the other partner. If we can grasp the general obligation in marriage we will have a blessed marriage. We don't have rights, we have debts. The Bible is written to tell us what our responsibilities are, not to let us know what our rights are. No one can force someone to do what the Bible says; each person is to make sure

that he is living it out. We always seem to want to tell others how the Bible says they are to treat us, instead of applying its teaching in our own lives.

CONCLUSION

Hermeneutics is needed because of the historical, cultural, linguistic and philosophical gaps that block the accurate understanding of God's Word.

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