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### — Our Pastors Speak —



#### COUNSEL FROM CORINTHIANS

Preserving the  
Christian Marriage

by Rev. N. E. Trafton

Marriage is a privilege, but it can be a problem, so says Paul. Some have argued that Paul was not qualified to write on this subject being unmarried. Something like the unclaimed Treasure who has all the answers for the harassed parents with their squirming brood. However, in all fairness, let us remember that the Apostle is not setting himself up as a marriage counsellor, but feels obligated to answer questions arising in this infant church. The Jews considered marriage a duty, and looked with disdain on those who were still unattached. The Gentiles advocated celibacy as a christian grace, a separation from the desires of the flesh, resulting in a greater devotion to the person of Christ. Paul saw the dangers in both directions, and sought to give practical guidance in these matters. In these days of moral decay, when society is struggling with the multiple problems of broken homes and unfulfilled vows, the church is intrusted with the solemn obligation to preserve the sanctity of marriage. Tragic it is, but true, that much of the soft, sensual attitude toward the opposite sex has invaded the sacred precincts of the Church. We have too many incidents that weaken our witness and indicate that somewhere we have failed to challenge the highest and best in our followers. The traditional white wedding has changed to a sickly gray, devoid of those elements that make marriage honorable and holy.

Consider with me several principles of Christian marriage as suggested by the Apostle. First, Marriage is a Protection. Chapter 7 begins with moral safeguards. "To avoid fornication, let man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband." In no way does this statement imply that an unmarried person would become a fornicator. Rather, Paul strongly states that unmarried believers can be of greater service to God and the world, if they are content to remain in that state. Nevertheless, for the majority of individuals, marriage is a protection, and satisfies the urges of the whole personality.

Secondly, Marriage is a Partnership. No room for independence here. Due benevolence is demanded, as well as consideration for the needs of each other. There is no place in this set-up for a prudish policy of isolation. Some of the cruelest acts ever perpetrated lie in this bracket. Many a person has been broken on the rack of a selfish and unfeeling companion. Our present age has an exag-

gerated concern for sex harmony in marriage. Christian marriage emphasizes the absolute necessity of a spiritual union, with the strong assurance that all other adjustments will be realized. This is one area where a full heart is more beneficial than a full head.

Thirdly, Marriage is a Privilege — not a necessity. For some, marriage would be a mistake. Emotionally, they sense no real lack in remaining single. History records the fact that many men and women who have championed great and worthy causes were unmarried. All honor to such people, they have my respect and appreciation. On the other hand, marriage can militate against our best spiritual good. Paul warns about the distractions that hinder the spiritual growth of husbands and wives. The abuse of a privilege creates a problem.

Finally, Marriage has its Problems. The frequency of divorce or separation is alarming. For the christian, divorce is the last resort, and leaves no room for the consideration of another partner. Verse 11 says, "But if she depart, let her remain unmarried, or be reconciled to her husband." Then there is the problem of the unbelieving husband or wife. If they choose to remain, well and good, if not let them depart. God has called us to peace, and in some instances peace in the home can only be restored by separation. Conscientious christians have suffered years of agony, hoping for the salvation of the other, while the family has been subjected to an unwholesome environment. Paul places a question mark over this idea by asking, "For what knowest thou, O wife, whether thou shalt save thy husband? or how knowest thou, O man, whether thou shalt save thy wife?" God has provided a peaceful settlement for these problems. The Church today faces a confused society. We must preserve the sacredness of marriage, and point the way to a deeper, fuller and more satisfying life in Jesus Christ.

### \* \* \* *Know God's Will*

You have been appointed to know God's will (Acts 2:14 RV)—be sure of this. And if as yet it is not clearly made known to you, adopt these precautions:

Carefully remove all your preconceptions and prejudices so that your mind and heart can be a tablet for God to write on.

Set aside much time for waiting on God in the study of His holy word.

Let the glory of Jesus be the supreme consideration with you.

Do not run to and fro, asking your friends what they would recommend. Wait the Lord's pleasure, nor dare to act unless you are sure that you are in line with His purpose.

Mark the trend of His providence, for it will clearly corroborate (make certain) His inner voice.

When you have once made up your mind in faith and prayer, dare to act and never look back. He will not let you be ashamed.

F. B. Meyer