

Time Audit Chronicles: Marriage and Singleness

(1 Corinthians 7:1-40)

Prologue: Balancing Relationships and Devotion

The Presswood family sat at the table, poring over 1 Corinthians 7:1-40, where Paul provides thoughtful guidance on marriage, singleness, and faithfulness in one's circumstances. Ariel, always full of questions, had been thinking about how people balance their personal lives and their relationship with God. Alice, with Mr. Fluffernutter perched on her lap, imagined how the people in Corinth must have felt as they wrestled with these deeply personal issues. In her mind, she saw a humorous scene where all the people of Corinth were lined up, and Paul stood at a booth with two big signs: 'Get Married' and 'Stay Single.' Each person would step up, scratch their head, and debate which line to join, while Paul patiently explained that both choices could honor God. Alice giggled as she whispered to Mr. Fluffernutter, 'Which line would you choose? I think you'd stay single—no bunny drama!'

"Daddy," Ariel asked, "Why does Paul focus so much on marriage and singleness? Was it because people back then didn't know how to handle these things?"

Ryan smiled, appreciating Ariel's curiosity. "That's a great question, Ariel. The believers in Corinth were living in a very complicated culture, with a lot of different ideas about relationships. Some people thought marriage was the most important thing, while others believed that staying single was more spiritual. Paul wrote to help them understand how their relationship with Jesus should shape their choices, whether they were married or single."

Ariel tilted her head. "So, Paul was saying it's not about which one is better—it's about serving God faithfully in whatever situation you're in?"

"Exactly," Ryan said. "Paul wanted the Corinthians to see that their first priority should always be serving the Lord. Whether they were married or single, their focus should be on living for Jesus and using their circumstances to glorify Him."

Ariel pondered this for a moment. "I guess it means that both marriage and singleness have their own challenges and blessings, right?"

"Right," Ryan affirmed. "Paul wasn't trying to say one was better than the other. He was showing that both have value in God's Kingdom, and both can be used to serve God. It's really about where your heart is and how you use your situation for His glory."

Ariel nodded slowly. As she thought more about Paul's words, she found herself reflecting on how this applied to her own life. She began to understand that Paul's teaching wasn't about minimizing family relationships, but about elevating God's Kingdom above everything else. She thought about how much she loved her family—their laughter, the way they supported each other, even the small disagreements that helped them grow. But she also began to see the bigger picture, the eternal perspective that Paul was trying to convey.

'If everything we do is meant to serve God,' Ariel thought, 'then even my love for my family should come second to my devotion to Him.' It was a challenging realization, but it also gave her a sense of

purpose. She could see how living with an eternal perspective meant that her actions, whether at home or elsewhere, needed to reflect God's love and point others to Him.

Ariel realized that singleness, as Paul described, wasn't a lesser way of life—it was a focused way to serve God without distractions. And marriage, too, was a way to demonstrate God's love through the partnership and sacrifices shared between spouses. Both were valuable, and both could bring glory to God if approached with the right heart.

“So, it's not about whether you're married or single—it's about how you use your life to honor God.”

Ryan smiled. “Exactly, Ariel. That's what Paul wanted the Corinthians—and us—to understand.”

“Daddy,” Ariel asked, “Why did Paul write so much about marriage and being single? Was it because people back then didn't know how to handle these things?”

Ryan smiled, appreciating Ariel's curiosity. “That's a great question, Ariel. The believers in Corinth were living in a very complicated culture, with a lot of different ideas about relationships. Some people thought marriage was the most important thing, while others believed that staying single was more spiritual. Paul wrote to help them understand how their relationship with Jesus should shape their choices, whether they were married or single.”

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“Exactly,” Ryan said. “Paul wanted the Corinthians to see that their first priority should always be serving the Lord. Whether they were married or single, their focus should be on living for Jesus and using their circumstances to glorify Him. Let's use the Time Audit Machine to see how Paul shared this wisdom with the church in Corinth.”

The Journey Begins: Marriage as a Gift from God (1 Corinthians 7:1-9)

The Time Audit Machine whirled to life, and the family found themselves in a gathering of the early church in Corinth, where believers were discussing Paul's letter. The room was crowded, with men and women seated on simple benches, their faces filled with both curiosity and concern. The air buzzed with the tension of many questions—some were whispering anxiously, while others sat with arms crossed, waiting for answers.

An elder stood in the middle of the room, holding Paul's letter, and began to read aloud. “It is good for a man not to touch a woman. Nevertheless, to avoid fornication, let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband.” (1 Corinthians 7:1-2).

Paul's words echoed in the room, and a few heads nodded, while others exchanged glances of confusion. “It is good for a man not to touch a woman. Nevertheless, to avoid fornication, let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband.” (1 Corinthians 7:1-2).

Ariel raised an eyebrow, her brow furrowed. “Paul isn't saying marriage is bad, is he?”

“No,” Ryan reassured her. “Paul isn't against marriage. He's saying that marriage is a good way to honor God by avoiding sexual immorality. For those who are married, Paul encourages faithfulness and

devotion to their spouses. He wanted the Corinthians to understand that marriage is a commitment where both partners should honor and care for one another.”

Paul continued, saying, “The husband should fulfill his marital duty to his wife, and likewise the wife to her husband.” (1 Corinthians 7:3). Ryan explained, “Paul emphasizes mutual respect and care in marriage. Both the husband and the wife have responsibilities to each other, and their relationship should reflect God’s love and selflessness.”

Ryan paused and then smiled at Ariel and Alice. “You know, girls, it’s kind of like how Mommy and I work together at home. Remember last week when Mommy had a lot of work to do, and I made dinner for everyone?”

Ariel nodded. “Yeah, you made spaghetti. It was really good!”

“Right,” Ryan continued. “That was a way for me to show love and support to Mommy. In marriage, it’s about helping each other and putting the other person’s needs before your own sometimes. That’s what Paul was talking about—mutual respect and selflessness. Just like how Mommy helps me when I’m tired or busy, we’re both committed to making sure we take care of each other and the family.”

Alice, holding Mr. Fluffernutter, piped up, “So, it’s like taking turns being nice?”

Ryan chuckled. “Exactly, Alice. It’s about being willing to serve each other. And whether you’re married or single, that same attitude of selflessness is what God wants from all of us. It’s about putting others first and loving them the way Jesus loves us.”

Ariel glanced at the believers around them, many of whom looked contemplative. She could see the weight of Paul’s words settling on the crowd.

Singleness: A Unique Opportunity to Serve the Lord (1 Corinthians 7:8-9, 25-35)

As the reading continued, Paul addressed those who were single. “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 Corinthians 7:8-9).

Ariel looked thoughtful. “So, Paul is saying singleness can be a good thing, but it’s okay to get married if you want to?”

“Yes,” Ryan said. “Paul saw singleness as a unique opportunity to focus completely on serving God, without the distractions that can come with family responsibilities. But he also understood that marriage is a good and honorable choice, especially for those who struggle with self-control.”

The elder continued, “The unmarried man is anxious about the things of the Lord, how to please the Lord. But the married man is anxious about worldly things, how to please his wife.” (1 Corinthians 7:32-33). Ariel could see the believers exchanging glances—some nodding in agreement, others looking down, perhaps reflecting on their own situations.

Later in the chapter, Paul expanded on this idea, saying, “The unmarried man is anxious about the things of the Lord, how to please the Lord. But the married man is anxious about worldly things, how to please his wife.” (1 Corinthians 7:32-33).

Ariel nodded, understanding. “So, Paul isn’t saying marriage is bad—he’s just pointing out that being married means you have more responsibilities, and it can be harder to stay focused on serving God.”

“That’s right,” Ryan said. “Paul wanted the Corinthians to know that both marriage and singleness are good, but they each come with different challenges and opportunities. The key is to use whatever situation you’re in to serve the Lord.”

Staying Faithful in Your Current Situation (1 Corinthians 7:17-24)

Paul also urged the Corinthians to stay faithful in their current circumstances. “Let every man abide in the same calling wherein he was called.” (1 Corinthians 7:20).

Ryan pointed to the gathering. “Paul is telling the Corinthians that they don’t need to change their marital status to serve God. If they were single when they became Christians, they can remain single. If they were married, they should stay married. What matters most is being faithful to God where they are.”

Ariel looked curious. “So, it’s not about trying to change your situation—it’s about serving God wherever you are?”

“Exactly,” Ryan said. “Paul was addressing a mindset that said you had to be in a certain situation to be spiritual. But Paul wanted them to see that their circumstances weren’t the most important thing—their relationship with Jesus was.”

Ariel paused, her expression growing more thoughtful. “But what if your situation is really hard? Like, if you’re stuck in a place you don’t want to be?”

Ryan nodded, sensing the weight of her question. “That’s when it gets challenging, Ariel. Staying faithful when things are hard is what makes our trust in God grow deeper. Remember, Paul himself went through a lot of difficult times—he was imprisoned, beaten, and faced all kinds of hardships. But he stayed faithful because he knew that God was with him, no matter what.”

Ariel looked down, thinking. “So, even if it’s really hard, we have to trust that God has a plan?”

“Exactly,” Ryan said gently. “It’s about believing that God can use whatever situation we’re in for His glory. Sometimes that means being patient and waiting, and other times it means finding ways to serve God right where we are, even if it’s not where we want to be.”

Ariel smiled slightly. “I guess it’s like when I have to help Alice, even when I’d rather be doing something else. It’s hard, but it’s still important.”

Ryan chuckled. “That’s a great example, Ariel. It’s not always easy, but when we put others first and trust God, we’re living out the gospel in a real way. And that’s what Paul wanted the Corinthians—and us—to understand.”

Alice, listening intently, turned to Mr. Fluffernutter and whispered, “So, even if you’re just a bunny, you can still be important, right?” She giggled, her imagination taking over as she envisioned the people of Corinth in a whimsical scenario. In her mind, they all had to choose between becoming ‘superheroes’ if they stayed single or ‘sidekicks’ if they got married. She pictured Paul standing in front of a line of Corinthians, handing out capes to those who chose to be single, saying, “You’re free to

serve God with undivided attention!” Then, he handed matching sidekick costumes to the married couples, smiling as he said, “Together, you can support each other as you serve God.”

Alice giggled again and whispered to Mr. Fluffernutter, “I think you’d be a superhero, no bunny drama, right?”

Later that night, as Alice drifted off to sleep, she found herself dreaming of a world where everyone could serve God in their own unique way. In her dream, people stood in line, choosing whether they wanted to be superheroes or sidekicks. The superheroes, dressed in vibrant capes, flew around, helping people without any distractions, dedicating their full focus to God’s work. The sidekicks, however, were not any less important—they worked in pairs, supporting each other, sharing the load, and using their teamwork to serve God and others.

Alice watched as the superheroes and sidekicks worked side by side. She saw a married couple lifting a heavy burden together, their combined strength making the task easier. She also saw a single person comforting a child, giving all their attention to that moment without needing to worry about anything else. It was a beautiful scene, full of harmony and purpose.

In her dream, Alice turned to Mr. Fluffernutter, who was now wearing a tiny cape of his own. “See, everyone can serve God, whether they’re alone or with someone else. It’s all about using what you have and where you are.”

Mr. Fluffernutter seemed to nod in agreement, and Alice smiled in her sleep, her innocent yet profound understanding of God’s Kingdom shining through even in her dreams. She knew that whether someone was a superhero or a sidekick, they all had a special role to play in God’s story.

Ariel looked curious. “So, it’s not about trying to change your situation—it’s about serving God wherever you are?”

“Exactly,” Ryan said. “Paul was addressing a mindset that said you had to be in a certain situation to be spiritual. But Paul wanted them to see that their circumstances weren’t the most important thing—their relationship with Jesus was.”

The Bigger Picture: Serving the Lord Wholeheartedly (1 Corinthians 7:29-35)

Paul concluded with a focus on eternity. “The time is short...those who have wives should live as though they had none, and those who weep as though they did not weep.” (1 Corinthians 7:29-30).

Ariel looked puzzled. “What does Paul mean by that? Is he saying people shouldn’t care about their families?”

Ryan shook his head. “Not at all. Paul isn’t saying to neglect your responsibilities. He’s reminding the Corinthians that this life is temporary, and our ultimate focus should always be on God’s Kingdom. Whether we’re married, single, happy, or sad, our hearts should be set on eternal things, not just the here and now.”

Paul’s words echoed again: “This I say for your own benefit...to promote good order and to secure your undivided devotion to the Lord.” (1 Corinthians 7:35).

Ariel smiled, beginning to understand. “So, the main point is to keep Jesus at the center, no matter what your situation is.”

“Exactly,” Ryan said. “Whether you’re married or single, the goal is to live with an undivided devotion to the Lord. That’s what Paul wanted the Corinthians to understand.”

Alice nodded and then added with a grin, “And maybe have a family feast too, where everyone’s invited, even Mr. Fluffernutter.” The family laughed, the weight of the lesson lightened by Alice’s playful imagination.

Paul’s words echoed again: “This I say for your own benefit...to promote good order and to secure your undivided devotion to the Lord.” (1 Corinthians 7:35).

Ariel smiled. “So, the main point is to keep Jesus at the center, no matter what your situation is.”

“Exactly,” Ryan said. “Whether you’re married or single, the goal is to live with an undivided devotion to the Lord. That’s what Paul wanted the Corinthians to understand.”

Takeaway: Faithfulness in Every Season

As the family returned to their own time, they reflected on Paul’s teaching. Ariel looked at her father thoughtfully. “So, Paul was telling the Corinthians that it’s not about whether you’re married or single—it’s about how you use your situation to serve God.”

“Yes,” Ryan said. “Paul wanted them to see that both marriage and singleness are gifts from God, and each one comes with its own opportunities and challenges. What matters most is being faithful in whatever situation you’re in and keeping your focus on Jesus.”

Alice, holding Mr. Fluffernutter, added, “So, it’s like, if you’re married, you can serve God with your family. And if you’re not, you can still serve God in other ways.”

“That’s exactly right,” Ryan said. “Paul’s message reminds us that our circumstances don’t define us—our relationship with Jesus does. Whether we’re married or single, we’re called to live with faithfulness, contentment, and an undivided devotion to God.”

Key Teaching: Serve the Lord Wholeheartedly

In 1 Corinthians 7:1-40, Paul provides timeless guidance on marriage, singleness, and living faithfully in one’s circumstances. He emphasizes that both marriage and singleness are gifts from God, and each offers unique opportunities to serve the Lord. Paul encourages believers to focus on their relationship with Jesus, keeping their eyes on eternal priorities rather than being overly concerned with earthly circumstances. The passage teaches us that true fulfillment comes not from our marital status, but from living with faithfulness and devotion to God in every season of life.