

Family and Christian Responsibility

“Defraud ye not one the other, except it be with consent for a time, that ye may give yourselves to fasting and prayer; and come together again, that Satan tempt you not for your incontinency” (1 Corinthians 7:5).

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Introduction

In this study concerning Conditional Christian Living, we have been assigned the passage “Defraud ye not one the other, except it be with consent for a time, that ye may give yourselves to fasting and prayer; and come together again, that Satan tempt you not for your incontinency” (1 Corinthians 7:5). In this chapter Paul will address some of the “things whereof ye wrote unto me” (7:1). He will write of things which pertain to those who are married as well as to the unmarried. Verses 1-24 are directed to the married and verses 25-40 to those who remain single. He lays the groundwork for this section by saying, “...It is good for a man not to touch a woman.” The word “touch” here refers to the intimate relationship authorized between the husband and wife (Genesis 6:20; Proverbs 6:29). Paul tells us that a single life is good, but not required. In fact he states his approval of marriage in Hebrews 13:4 and Ephesians 5:31-33.

He is teaching that an unmarried situation could be better due to the “present distress” (verse 26). Persecution was hard upon the church of the First Century and Christianity called for strong determination and dedication. Paul is emphasizing that the persecution of one’s family might be too hard to overcome. However, Paul also recognizes the strong physical urges that are natural between a man and a woman. Thus, he says, “Nevertheless, to avoid fornication, let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband” (verse 2). The husband and wife are to have their own mate as had been taught by the Lord (Matthew 19:3-9).

Definition of Terms

Defraud comes from the Greek word (ἀποστερέω) apostereo - **Thayer’s Definition:** 1) to defraud, rob, despoil. **A Related Word by Thayer’s/Strong’s Number:** from G575 and stereo (to deprive). (ἀπό) apo **Thayer Definition:** 1) of separation, the separation of a part from the whole; of local separation, after verbs of motion from a place, i.e. of departing, of fleeing, where of a whole some part is taken, of *any kind of separation of one thing from another by which the union or fellowship of the two is destroyed, of a state of separation*, that is of distance by place or time. Keep in mind the word refers to a separation by distance in place or in time.

Except is a restrictive term. The Greek word is εἰμήτι (eimeti) **Thayer Definition:** unless indeed, except, unless perhaps. Paul is telling the church at Corinth that there is a possibility that from time to time a married couple might be relieved from their responsibility of “rendering of due benevolence.” However, this was not to be the normal situation. By inspiration, Paul writes to warn them to avoid a separation which could cause them to be tempted to sin. Temporary separation for specific occasions is recorded in the Old Testament (Exodus 19:15; 1 Samuel 21:4-5).

Another word that we should understand in this study is the word **incontinency** which means want of self-control, incontinence, intemperance (ἀκρασία – akrasia). This word is from another word (ἀκράτης - akrates) which means *powerless*, that is, *without self control*: - incontinent. This Greek word is found only in our text and in Matthew 23:25 where it is translated as excess. Therefore this conduct shows a want of power over one's self' incontinence or intemperance.

We must also understand the term “due benevolence” which is found in verse 3. The American Standard Version translates the term “her due” referring to the physical relationship which is confined to and permitted only by those who are married. The word “benevolence” is found in no other passage of the Bible. *The Literal Translation of the Holy Bible* translates 1 Corinthians 7:3 with these words, “Let the husband give due kindness to the wife, and likewise the wife also to the husband.”

Each one of these words or phrases are important in determining the immediate context of the message found in 1 Corinthians chapter 7. These words will also help us understand the principles, which will be applied to an extended application. When working with a passage we must be careful to deal with that passage in its proper context. However, it is possible to use certain principles found in a given passage to extend to other applications as well so long as each is presented in light of and in harmony with the word of God.

Immediate Context

In the immediate context, Paul gives some exhortations which were designed to keep the brethren at Corinth faithful. Chapter 7 gives instruction concerning marriage. The city of Corinth was a coastal city with a population of about 400,000. Since this city was a prominent center of commerce in the Mediterranean world, it was a place for all sorts of vice. An example of its immorality was found in the temple of Venus (Aphrodite), which hosted 1000 priestesses dedicated to prostitution in the name of religion. The city's close proximity to the city of Athens very likely added intellectualism to the many other vices found there. From the beginning of the letter it is evident that this worldly environment had its effect upon the church in Corinth. It is a wonder that a church even existed at all in such a wicked city.

The apostle tells the Corinthians that it would be good during this present time, for the Christians to remain single. However he says that marriage, and the privileges that are associated with this union were legislated by Divine authority. Every man must determine for himself, seeking counsel from God as to how he can best conduct his life. Because of the “present distress” it was better for one not to have the obligation that is enjoined with having a family. Things could be difficult, because with a family comes responsibilities which must be fulfilled. The distresses to which believers were beginning to be subjected were making the married state less desirable than the single. This condition would be present within the body of believers and seemed to escalate just before the destruction of Jerusalem. This fact can be seen in Christ's prophecy of this powerful event (Matthew 24:8-21 and Acts 11:28).

To fully and properly understand the meaning of 1 Corinthians 7:5 we must realize that Paul is not giving a commandment. He is giving good sound advice and encouragement. He qualifies the statements by saying, “But I speak this by permission, and not of commandment.” The institution

of marriage is authorized in God's plan for mankind. Marriage is the ideal situation in which a man and woman can live and fulfill their natural desires (Genesis 2:20-23). In fact the Bible encourages marriage so as to fulfill man's many faceted needs both emotionally and physically. The Hebrew writer said, "Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge" (Hebrews 13:4). In fact Paul said that there would be a time when the faithful would fall away from the Lord by "...giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron; 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 Timothy 4:1-3). Therefore we can see that Paul is not putting a restriction on the marriage but giving sound advice to those who were unmarried.

Now let us observe the verses leading up to verse 5. To avoid fornication a man and a woman were to have their own mates. It is only in the marriage bond that the sexual appetite can be fulfilled. To stray from this restriction is to sin (Hebrews 13:4). The phrase "...let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband" shows the relationship is to be monogamous. Every man is to have his **own wife** and every woman is to have her **own husband!** The passage goes on to tell us that both the husband and the wife have an obligation to give the physical rights of marriage one to the other. It is out of harmony with the will of God for either one to withhold themselves from the other. Verse 4 clearly details this obligation, "The wife hath not power of her own body, but the husband: and likewise also the husband hath not power of his own body, but the wife." Her person belongs to her husband; her husband's person belongs to her: neither of them has any authority to refuse what the other has a matrimonial right to have. Verse three tells us this is something which is to be rendered one to the other. The King James Version says, "due benevolence" which means kindness, good will and describes the conjugal rights of marriage. Some have rendered the words as the matrimonial debt, that which a wife owes to her husband, and the husband to his wife. If there is alienation of affection the consequences can be destructive and could lead to the breaking of the marriage vows. In such cases the wife has to blame herself for the infidelity of her husband, and the husband for that of his wife. In such cases neither could be considered innocent. In his Notes on the New Testament Albert Barnes said that verse 3 speaks of keeping purity and stability in the marriage relationship. He noted,

"Let them not imagine that there is any virtue in being separate from each other, as if they were in a state of celibacy" - "Doddridge." They are bound to each other; in every way they are to evince kindness, and to seek to promote the happiness and purity of each other. There is a great deal of delicacy used here by Paul, and his expression is removed as far as possible from the grossness of pagan writers. His meaning is plain; but instead of using a word to express it which would be indelicate and offensive, he uses one which is not indelicate in the slightest degree. The word which he uses εὐνοίαν *eunoian*, "benevolence" denotes kindness, good-will, affection of mind. And by the use of the word "due" ὀφειλομένην *opheilomeneṇn*, he reminds them of the sacredness of their vow, and of the fact that in person, property, and in every respect, they belong to each other. It was necessary to give this direction, for the contrary might have been regarded as proper by many who would have supposed there was special virtue and merit in living separate from each other; as facts have shown that many have imbibed such an idea - and it was not possible to give the rule with more delicacy than Paul has done. Many mss., however, instead of "due benevolence," read ὀφειλὴν *opheileṇn*,

“a debt, or that which is owed;” and this reading has been adopted by Griesbach in the text. Homer, with a delicacy not unlike the apostle Paul, uses the word φιλότητα *filote`ta*, “friendship,” to express the same idea. (112)

Paul continues this line of thought in verse 5 when he writes, “Defraud ye not one the other, except it be with consent for a time, that ye may give yourselves to fasting and prayer; and come together again, that Satan tempt you not for your incontinency.” In this verse the **exception** is given. Keeping with the context we are to understand that the God-given rights found only in the marriage bond is not to be withheld **UNLESS** it be “with consent for a time.” With consent means to be together, something that is in agreement, and some decision that is made together. The exception is when both agree for a period of time. However, this abstinence from the physical relationship is to be short-lived, because if the physical desires are not fulfilled in the marriage relationship, Satan will seek to destroy the home through the temptation of fornication. It is often the case when there is too much time spent apart that because of one’s incontinency (lack of self-restraint) sin will enter in and in many cases destroy what “God hath joined together” (Matthew 19:6). We must note that the time spent apart is to be for a specific purpose. In the Old Testament we are given examples of those, who due to religious matters were not to have relations with their wives. Notice these verses; “And he said unto the people, Be ready against the third day: come not at your wives” (Exodus 19:15); “And David answered the priest, and said unto him, Of a truth women have been kept from us about these three days, since I came out, and the vessels of the young men are holy, and the bread is in a manner common, yea, though it were sanctified this day in the vessel” (1 Samuel 21:5).

The point that we must emphasize and understand from this passage is that the purity and harmony of the home is to be maintained. Concerning the marriage, Paul says that sometimes it is better not to be married, yet to avoid fornication marriage is the only avenue in which the physical desires can be realized. Yet in this situation every man is to have his own wife and every woman is to have her own husband. And they are to render to one another that which is due them. This is a beautiful picture of the marriage relationship as God would have it.

Extended Applications – How Families and Christians Defraud One Another

The word defraud as we saw is defined as to keep back, to deprive and to withhold. Please bear in mind we have discussed the context of 1 Corinthians 7:1-7 showing the necessity of fulfilling the responsibility of the husband to the wife and of the wife to her husband. Yet, I believe we can make some extended applications of these same principles. When we consider “due benevolence” and remember it has to do with giving or paying a debt which is owed we can also see there are obligations and responsibilities which are due our families and our brethren.

To begin with, we need to realize that we have an obligation to all men. Jesus came to “seek and save that which was lost” (Luke 19:10). The purpose of His leaving heaven was to save the souls of mankind. In the very beginning when Adam and Eve sinned God made a promise, “And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel” (Genesis 3:15). That promise was fulfilled in the coming of Jesus and His life’s blood shed at Calvary (John 3:16; Romans 5:8). When the Great Commission was given the Christian was given a charge to “Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to

every creature..." (Mark 16:15). This is a debt which we owe. It is a responsibility which we must not neglect. We must not withhold or keep back the saving message of our Lord.

Is it possible for us to **defraud** our brethren? I truly believe that not only is it possible, but I am convinced that it is being done on a daily basis. How is this possible, some may ask? I would respond by asking, do we have any responsibility to our brethren? Are we sometimes withholding that which is due them? Let us consider...

Do we love our brethren as God instructs? (John 15:12) Someone said love is the glue that holds lives together. I believe this is a true statement. I would go so far as to say that love is the glue which holds congregations together. We cannot say we love God without loving our brethren (1 John 4:20). Jesus said, "A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another" (John 13:34). Our love for one another should be as Jesus demonstrated. It should be with the same tender affection, willingness to endure trials, to practice self-denial, and, if need be, to lay down our lives for each other (1 John 3:16). In fact I cannot say I love God and not love my brethren (1 John 4:20). I cannot say I love the Lord and keep not His commandments (John 14:15). We have a responsibility to our brethren which cannot be withheld.

1. Do we exhort one another (Hebrews 10:24-25)? There are many who do not see the need of assembling with the saints. However, the Scriptures instructs us to "consider one another, to provoke unto love and good works: Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together..." We must not defraud our brethren by staying away from the worship assemblies. We should try to exhort one another on a regular and ongoing basis. Continually stir each other to duty, lest you be hardened against God's voice by the deceitfulness of sin (Hebrews 3:13).
2. Do we endeavor to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace (Ephesians 4:3)? Paul had penned an epistle to the church at Corinth admonishing them to be united. He had said they were involved in "envying, and strife, and divisions" (1 Corinthians 3:3). There can be no unity when the mind is set on self. Unity demands a self-emptying attitude. The letter to the Philippians spoke of this true unity, "Fulfill ye my joy, that ye be like minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind. Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves" (Philippians 2:2-3). We must not defraud one another in this matter of Christian unity.
3. Do we seek to restore the erring (Galatians 6:1-2)? The Galatian brethren were instructed to fulfill their responsibility to the erring member. When a brother is "overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted." The word "fault" is a transgression of God's law (1 John 3:4). But notice the admonition given to the ones who are spiritual, "restore such an one." This is a duty, an obligation, a responsibility. We must carry out "due benevolence" (that which is due, required) to our fallen brethren. Just as the marriage is a state of mutual obligation the church has mutual obligations as well. Each must yield to the other by doing whatever those obligations and requirements might be.
4. Do we go out of our way to be at peace with our brethren (1 Thessalonians 5:13)? The church

cannot grow and prosper under the weight of criticism and divisive mindsets. When an eldership makes a decision which is Biblically sound we have no right to “sound off” against that decision. An eldership should be given their due. No member should ever defraud (holdback) the respect and obedience that is due the office of an eldership (Hebrews 13:17).

Is it possible for us to **defraud** our families? If I had the power to change one thing in the church today it would be how families function. By that I mean that families are not carrying out their God given responsibilities. The church, community, and country would be stronger if families were tending to their obligations one to another. Husbands can defraud their wives, wives can defraud their husbands, parents can defraud the children and the children can defraud the parents.

We have already discussed how husbands and wives must give “due benevolence” in the carrying out of the sexual relationship, one owing the other what is due them. But it can also be said that we have other obligations to one another in which we must be careful not to defraud.

1. The husband is to be the head of his family (Ephesians 5:23). What a great responsibility! The husband is to take control and lead his family. This does not mean that he is to be a dictator. It may be in days gone by that we men have distorted the concept of what the head of the family is to be. To be the head of the family means that he takes into consideration all things in the making of a decision. But he is responsible to God and to his family to carry out this leadership role. He is to provide for his family (1 Timothy 5:8). He is to teach and train his children (Ephesians 6:4). He is to love his wife as “Christ loved the church and gave Himself for it” (Ephesians 5:25). Every man who does not provide for the spiritual as well as the physical well being of his family has not met his responsibility and thus has defrauded his family.
2. The wife is to be in submission (Ephesians 5:22). The wife and mother are the “tenderness” of the home. It is mother who will sit up all night with a sick child and will go through much travail as she brings her child into this world (John 16:21). Titus 2 gives a good insight into her God-given responsibilities. The older women are to teach the younger women to “be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children, to be discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good obedient to their own husbands...” (Titus 2:4-5). Women defraud their families when these things are not learned and carried out. They must not hold back that which is due their husbands and children.
3. The children are to obey their parents (Ephesians 6:1-3). Each child has the responsibility to obey their parents (Romans 1:30). They are to honor the parents (Proverbs 4:1; Deuteronomy 5:16; Exodus 20:12). There is a kind of respect due parents which is due to no other person on the face of the earth. “Honor thy father and thy mother,” includes esteem for them, obedience to their lawful commands, come when they call you, go where they send you, do what they ask of you, and refrain from doing what they forbid. And this, as obedient children should be done in a cheerful way and from a loving heart. How shall a child ever repay the debt owed to godly parents?
4. The parents are to train and correct their children (Ephesians 6:4; 2 Timothy 1:5). We train by

teaching the word and then being an example of what is taught. A child must have discipline if they are to grow in the right direction. The Bible is clear in this obligation. I know this is not a popular thing in our day and time. But it is still God's way (Proverbs 22:15; 23:13-14; 29:15; Hebrews 12:7-10). Many shrink back from this obligation and will not carry out this due benevolence. To defraud our children in this area will cause them to dismiss authority in general.

5. Every family member should be concentrating on helping the others go to heaven. Here is a responsibility that we will all be thankful for one day. When the Judgment of mankind comes, those who have sought to save their households will be thankful and will not regret one single moment spent in this endeavor. How many do we know that have defrauded their families in this area? It takes dedicated effort but love should overshadow every hour, day, month and year spent in saving our loved ones. I do not want to someday realize that I left behind things undone in this matter. The rich man did and he was sorry (Luke 16:22-31).

Conclusion

Satan is alive and he is at his work in a furious manner (1 Peter 5:8). He is ever seeking to divide God's people. He wants to divide us from God. In the very first instance of sin he came into the presence of God's creation to cause the separation of man from God. It is interesting to note that he came to Eve to tempt her when, it appears, she and Adam were apart. She was first tempted and she gave to her husband (1 Timothy 2:14). We must be very careful that THINGS do not separate the family. Sometimes we do not give due benevolence because we are too tied up in other things. It can be sports, work, community activities, and a mountain of other things. But we must never allow those things to keep us from doing our God-given responsibilities. Be careful that we do not defraud one another. Whether it be in the relationship spoken of in 1 Corinthians 7:5 or whether it be in our day-to-day work as a Christian. The import of this passage is found in the phrase "except it be with consent for a time." Never neglect the obligations and responsibilities we have as husbands, wives, children or brethren in Christ.

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