

A Reading of 1 Corinthians 7: 1-16: Implications for the Unmarried and Married in Ghana



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ABSTRACT

This paper studies Paul’s view on marriage as the way forward for dealing with sexual immorality in 1 Corinthians 7:1-16. In Ghana, it is generally observed that sexual immorality at times leads to separation in marriage or divorce. Some schools of thought posit that any polygynous man who converts to the Christian faith, should maintain his first wife and separate or divorce the other wives as keeping them would constitute sexual immorality. The paper employed a literary reading of the text and it proposed that marriage is not an order from God to curb sexual immorality rather Paul proposed it to the Corinthians who could not avoid sexual immorality. Again, the text shows sexual intercourse as a specific marital role for each spouse without an excuse. Implications are drawn from the reading for Ghanaians. The paper concludes that marriage is not a panacea for sexual immorality.

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Publication History

Received 31st August, 2022

Accepted 9th January, 2023

Published online 25th January, 2023

Keywords: *Sexual Immorality, Marriage, Separation and Divorce*

INTRODUCTION

Paul, in his attempt to eradicate sexual immorality that was perpetuated among those who ascribed to the Christian faith in the city of Corinth, stated in his first epistle in 1 Corinthians 7:2 that every woman should have her own husband and every man his own wife which is a clear call to marry. Looking at Paul’s view, the practical question that quickly comes to mind is: Is it possible that Paul’s instruction in 1 Corinthians 7:2 would solve the problem of sexual immorality? An answer to the question points to the reading of 1 Corinthians 7:1-16 which this paper did. Charles Kingsley Barrett, in his commentary, quoted Lightfoot on 1 Corinthians 7:2 that it is “an incidental prohibition of polygamy.”¹ It shows that Paul who tried to deal with the immoral problem was also consciously or unconsciously against polygamous marriage among Christians in Corinth. The church in Corinth was made of people coming from different backgrounds such as slaves, freed persons, Jews and non-Jews who were cut off from their traditional social location, looking for a satisfying way of life.² Freed women, who had no livelihood would be at the mercy of some wealthy men who would take an advantage of them hence indulging in sexual immorality and leading to polygyny on the part of the men. In this regard, it was not out of place for Paul to give a directive in an attempt to solve the canker of sexual immorality in 1 Corinthians 7:2.

¹ Charles Kingsley Barret, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (New York: Harper and Row, 1968), 155.

² David J. Lull, *1 Corinthians* (St. Louis, Missouri: Chalice Press, 2007).

In Ghana, one cannot deny sexual immorality cases such as adultery, fornication, defilement and rape that have cut across different religions, educational institutions, both private and government establishments, and homes. Since some Ghanaians are also engulfed in this web of sexual immorality which at times leads to separation in marriage, divorce, teenage pregnancy and suicide, it poses challenges and problems such that it makes it difficult for some married couples to sustain their marriages as in matters of sexual relations are concerned in the contemporary times. This motivated the author to read 1 Corinthians 7:1-16 and thus came up with implications for both the unmarried and married in Ghana to take informed decisions when the need arises.

Discussion on marriage

In Ghana marriage is officially contracted when a man's lineage pays a bride wealth to the family of a woman.³ The payment and acceptance of the bride-wealth signify an official traditional marriage between the prospective couple, their respective families, the community and the world at large. On the one hand, sexual immorality is a taboo in all cultures and it is so among Christians in Ghana. Christians in Ghana also accept the fact that traditional marriages are the foundation on which church leaders like pastors and priests bless marriages in the church. Again, Christians follow other instructions from the Bible to add to what they already have traditionally.

According to Austin Fagothey, marriage is a contract such that a man and a woman give and receive rights and duties toward each other concerning cohabitation and intercourse.⁴ He explains that marriage as a state is a society or lasting union of a man and a woman resulting from such a contract. Fagothey's view points to two powerful issues which are marriage as a lasting union and intercourse as a right in marriage. The understanding is that "marriage as a lasting union" means marriage devoid of divorce and "intercourse as a right in marriage" means that sexual intercourse is only allowed in the bond of marriage.⁵ In their book, *Biblical marriage in an African context*, Nii and Margaret Darku regard marriage as the customs, rules and obligations that established a special relationship between them, their kin and the wider society. The understanding is that although marriage is between a man and a woman, the attitude of the couple matter very much in society.⁶ Looking at the two descriptions of marriage, the author sees marriage as a kind of voluntary union between a man and a woman in order to complement each other in life, make ends meet, uphold intercourse and possibly have children, and promote peace and tranquility in the society. So, one of the core mandates for married couples is a good relationship in sustaining marital life to enhance societal peace. Therefore, there is a need for harmonious complementary duties for the married and also awareness for those who want to marry in order to achieve what marriage entails.

Generally, there are different types of marriage like exogamy, endogamy, polygamy, monogamy and inter-faith marriage. Peter Sarpong posits that "polygamous marriage is either polygynous (one husband and two or more wives at the same time) or polyandrous (one wife two or more lawful husbands at the same time)".⁷ He makes readers aware that no community in Africa accepts polyandry. In Ghana polygyny is practised. It is important not to forget that before the advent of the Christian faith in Ghana polygyny traditionally strived and it is still in practice.

Today, the observation is that Christians in Ghana ascribe to ordinance marriage, so on one hand, they uphold monogamous marriage and on the other discourage polygynous marriage and do not even want to hear of it or tolerate it since some regard it as sexual immorality. As indicated earlier, they think that a polygynous husband who accepts the Christian faith should respect and maintain his first wife and separate or divorce his other wives to avoid sexual immorality. Similarly, they think any

³Peter Sarpong, *Ghana in Retrospect: Some aspects of Ghanaian culture*. (Tema; Ghana Publishing Corporation, 1974)

⁴ Austin S.T Fagothey, *Right and Reasons: Ethics in Theory and Practice*. (Saint Louis: The C.V Mosby Company, 1976).

⁵ Fagothey, *Rights and Reasons: Ethics in Theory and Practice*.

⁶ Nii Darku, and Margaret Darku, *Biblical marriage in an African context*. (Accra: SonLife Printing Press and Services, 2005).

⁷ Sarpong, *Ghana in Retrospect: Some aspects of Ghanaian Culture*, 78.

woman who is not the first wife before converting to the Christian faith needs to separate or divorce her husband to be free from committing sexual immorality. This view poses marital problems which is creating discomfort in homes in the country. The problem reflects Andrew Olu Igenozá's questions "... Is there any biblical basis for the insistence of the foreign missionaries and the churches they founded on monogamy? ... If polygamists intend to become Christians, or join those denominations that oppose polygamy, how should they be treated?"⁸

The questions reflect how Benezéri T. Kisémbó, Laurenti Magesa and Aylward Shorter, strongly disagree with the views of the Second Vatican Council which equated polygamy to the plague of divorce and the so-called free love and named it as disfigurement of marriage.⁹ In this wise, the authors state some advantages of polygamy as a way of curbing sexual immorality in traditional Africa. The advantages point to minimizing promiscuity and prostitution.¹⁰ Again, they unveiled another marital challenge within inter-faith marriage or mixed marriage. The mixed marriage has to do with the difference of understanding between Christianity and other religious systems on the vital purpose of marriage. The understanding is that some religions find it difficult to allow marriage between their members and other members who belong to different religions due to varied spiritual inclinations, beliefs and practices, for example, a Christian who would want to marry a Muslim or a traditional priest. The challenge points to mixing feelings for example on the part of Christians whose hope is that a Christian spouse can convert the non-Christian partner or who fears that the non-Christian partner can equally convert his or her Christian spouse.¹¹ In view of the sexual immorality and the challenge in inter-faith marriage, as indicated earlier, this paper read 1 Corinthians 7: 1-16 and shows the way forward for both the married and unmarried.

1 Corinthians 7:1-16 in context

Over the years, 1 Corinthians has attracted much attention because it handles practical issues that concern relations between its members and their neighbours in the first-century church.¹² It is also regarded as "a work of systematic theology" in matters of faith.¹³ One of the practical issues of 1 Corinthians is sexual immorality and some principles on marriage, as stated in 7:1-16.¹⁴

On the practical issue that relates to sexual immorality and marriage, prominent attention is paid to *porneias* (sexual immorality) in 7:2. Paul clearly indicates in verse 2 that because of *porneias* (sexual immorality), each person should have his or her own spouse. This view is regarded as "an incidental prohibition of polygamy".¹⁵ Paul's view in verse 2 was due to an issue brought to him by the church in Corinth,¹⁶ in the opening statement of chapter 7. In verse 1, Paul points to a situation concerning whether a man ought to marry or not. This is what brought about the issue of *porneias* in verse 2. It shows that the issue of *porneias* which also comes along with marriage and divorce starts from verses 1-16. In the bid to address the challenge in the church of Corinth, in verse 1, Paul adopts the position he took in verse 2 that a man should have his own wife and a woman her own husband. It means that verse 2 is not an independent statement on its own.

In Paul's attempt to sustain his view in verse 2 in regards to the issue of *porneias*, he rolls out some instructions for the married, unmarried and widows in the church of Corinth. Those who would marry were instructed to render what is due to each other, which implies sexual relations from verses

⁸ Andrew Olu Igenozá, *A Polygamy and the African Churches biblical appraisal of an African marriage system*. (Ibadan: The African Association for the study of Religion, Nigerian Publication Bureau, 2003), 5-6.

⁹ Benezéri T. Kisémbó, Laurenti Magesa and Aylward Shorter, *African Christian Marriage*. (Southampton: The Camelot Press Ltd., 1977).

¹⁰ Kisémbó, Magesa and Shorter, *African Christian Marriage*.

¹¹ Kisémbó, Magesa and Shorter, *African Christian Marriage*.

¹² James. D. G. Dunn, *1 Corinthians* (Sheffield Academic Press, 1995).

¹³ Barrett, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 17.

¹⁴ Edwin D. Freed, *The New Testament: A Critical Introduction* (Belmont: Wadsworth Publishing Company, 2001).

¹⁵ Barrett, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 155.

¹⁶ Lull, *1 Corinthians*.

2-7. Avoidance of *porneias* is highly implied when Paul gives two options which are (i) to remain as himself (Paul), or (ii) to marry if they cannot control themselves, for the unmarried and the widows in verses 8-9. Divorce and separation are prohibited for Christians in Corinth but those who married unbelievers were permitted to accept the situation if the unbelieving spouse decided to leave the marriage in verses 10-16. In this paper, the text is structured for easy reading as follows:

- a) Paying the marital due without an excuse, verses 1-7
- b) Instructions on sexual desire and divorce, verses 8-16.

Reading the text: 1 Corinthians 7:1-16

Paying the marital dues without an excuse: verses 1-7

Paul makes it clear in verse 2 that each woman should have her own husband and every man her own wife on the account of *porneias*. The context in which *porneias* is placed shows that it is a challenge which needs attention therefore, Paul proposes marriage as a way forward. The Greek word *de* which means “but” that opens the verse, links verse 1 to verse 2 because it throws light on the understanding of verse 2. In verse 1, the phrase *Kalon anthropo me apesthai* which means “good for a man not to touch a woman”, suggests that Paul was responding to an issue that has to do with whether a man ought to marry or not. Verse 2 seems to be a solution to the issue raised in verse 1 as indicated in the phrase earlier.

There are different interpretations of verse 2. Some scholars like Barrett and Bruce translated the word *porneias* as “fornication.”¹⁷ According to Gordon Fee, “fornication” as used in verse 2 means “illicit sexual relations between unmarried persons.”¹⁸ The word translated *porneias*¹⁹ is a Greek feminine plural noun and can also be translated as “sexual immorality” which indicates different forms of unacceptable sexual relations such as fornication, prostitution and adultery. The same word *porneias* is used in Matthew 5: 32 in the context of marriage which means “unfaithfulness”²⁰ on the part of the wife. Here, “unfaithfulness” may also mean “adultery”, which is another form of sexual immorality. Although verse 2 is not explicit on a particular type of *porneias* in its plural form, “sexual immorality” seems to be the meaning. Paul’s ideas about *porneias* on which account he proposes marriage does not render the meaning of verse 2 as God’s commandment for everybody or to marry so that sexual immorality will be eradicated in verse 2 because there is no word for God’s commandment in the Greek text. The reflex pronoun *eautou* which means “himself /herself” indicates his or her own spouse which implies a monogamous marriage.

Since marriage as stated in verse 2 is not a commandment from God to eliminate sexual intercourse, verses 3-6 lay out the importance Paul attaches to sexual intercourse within the bond of marriage. There are two things that stand out clearly in verses 3 and 4. The first one is *opheilen* which means “debt” or “due” and the second is *exousia* which means “authority”. Firstly, in the context of verse 3, the word *opheilen* is used as a metaphor for “sexual intercourse”²¹ within marriage. Therefore, “sex” is regarded as a “due” or “debt” to be paid or rendered by the people under marital vow-verse 3 “The husband should render what is due to his wife and in the same way the wife to the husband” hence, the rendering of the “due” which is sexual intercourse seems to be a role each spouse ought to play for the other. It reflects Paul’s position in verse 2 where marriage is proposed on an account of *porneias* (sexual immorality) implying that sexual intercourse is limited to marriage. Secondly, the word *exousia* which means “authority” in verse 4, has a link with the idea in verse 3. Verse 4, “The

¹⁷ Barrett, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*; Frederick Fyvie Bruce, *New Century Bible: 1 and 2 Corinthians* (London: Butter and Taner Ltd., 1978), 67.

¹⁸ Gordon. D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1987), 287.

¹⁹ Barclays M. Newman, Jr, *A Concise Greek-English Dictionary of the New Testament*, (Stuttgart: Biblia Druck Stuttgart, 1983), 147.

²⁰ Newman, Jr. *A Concise Greek-English Dictionary of the New Testament*, 147.

²¹ Bruce, *New Century Bible: 1 and 2 Corinthians*, 67.

wife has no authority over her own body but the husband, likewise the husband has no authority over his own body but the wife.”

It shows that one loses his or her *exousia* “authority” over his or her body if the “due” is rendered. Paul’s choice of these words *opheilen* and *exousia* and how he puts them in the context of the two verses to the church in Corinth is open and can easily be misunderstood by a spouse. This is because a spouse may use the phrase “has no authority over his own body” to press for the “due” since the other partner has no authority over his or her body. It is possible that the demand for the “due” by a spouse at a particular time may not be convenient for the other partner who has to render the “due”. The rendering and receiving of the “due” portray the beauty of the marital roles each spouse has to exercise as against *porneias* in verse 2. However, the recipient may not see the inconvenience he or she is causing to the spouse who is supposed to render the “due” because the content of the verses does not allow a spouse to give an excuse anytime the partner wants his or her “due”.

Verse 5 confirms verse 4 because the verb *apostereite* used in verse 5 means “refuse”, but it is in the second person plural, indicating that both husband and wife should not refuse each other the “due” in verse 4 except on a condition that they want to pray: verse 5, “Do not refuse one another unless you agree for a brief while, to pray and be together again, so that Satan will not tempt you because of your lack of self-control”

On the abstinence of sexual intercourse, Bruce says “reason for abstention varying from a week to thirty days is permitted in Mishnah K^e tubot V”.²² The Byzantine text characteristically adds fasting before prayer. However, the purpose clause “unless you agree for a brief while to pray” as it is used in verse 5 does not negate or modify the verb *apostereite* (refuse), therefore the clause does not allow a partner to use prayer as an excuse to reject the payment of what is “due” to his or her partner. It means sexual intercourse should be a consensus act between married couples. This explains Paul’s idea in verse 4 where he prohibits a spouse to have “authority” over himself/herself. Therefore, the context in 5 seems to promote an attitude of dependency where a spouse would not take an independent decision so far as sexual intercourse is concerned. The phrase “and be together again” in the verse substantiates the dependency. It also serves as a warning signal against Satan’s temptation which Paul states in the second part of the verse “so that Satan will not tempt you”. The context in which Paul uses the character Satan suggests that the Satanic temptation affects married couples who refuse to be together after the agreed period of prayer. The idea that is generated here shows that a married couple who does not come together after a period of prayer can fall into Satan’s temptation. Although the verse is silent on the type of “togetherness” and “temptation” the verb *apostereite* in the first part of the verse gives a clue in verses 3 and 4 where a spouse should render what is “due” in verse 3 and in the situation where no spouse has “authority” over himself or herself in verse 4.

Therefore, it is implicit that the issue of *porneias* against which marriage is proposed in verse 2 is conveyed to another level in verse 5. In this wise, the second part of verse 5 can now be understood in the context of verses 3 and 4. It means, if a spouse refuses to render his or her “due” which is sexual intercourse with their partner (verse 3) by not complying with verse 4 which rules out a spouse having *exousia* “authority” over his or her own body, then the state of “togetherness” in verse 5 will negatively be affected. This may then pave the way for Satan to tempt the affected partner to look for the “due” out of wedlock which can end in sexual immorality because of the lack of self-control. The question that quickly comes to mind is: is marriage a panacea to sexual immorality? A clear answer to the question shows that the idea of marriage as proposed in verse 2 cannot fully resolve the challenge of *porneias*. Therefore, verse 2, does not clearly mean that God commanded everybody to marry to enable him (God) to wipe out sexual immorality. So, marriage cannot be a panacea for sexual immorality.

Instructions to unmarried and married, widows, and on sexual desire and divorce: verses 8-16

The word “marry” and “self-control” are stated for the second time in verses 8 and 9. In the first instance in verse 2, Paul generally proposes marriage for those who cannot avoid *porneias* “sexual

²² Bruce, *New Century Bible: 1 and 2 Corinthians*, 67

immorality”. However, in the second instance, he specifically turns his attention to the *agamois* “unmarried” and *cherais* “widows” in an attempt to caution them from indulging in *porneias*. In verse 8, Paul makes a suggestion to the *agamois* and *cherais* when he uses the word *kago* which comes from *kai* and *ego*.²³ *Ego* is the first personal pronoun which means “I” so *hos kago* as used in verse 8 indicates “as myself”. It shows that Paul wants the *agamois* and *cherais* to remain as “himself” in verse 8. Interestingly, verse 8 is not explicit on Paul’s state of *hos kago* which he wants the *agamois* and *cherais* to emulate but verse 9 gives a clue. The clue in verse 9 is that Paul instructs the *agamois* and *cherais* to marry if they cannot exercise “self- control”. The phrase “But if you cannot exercise self-control” portrays a change of Paul’s view in verse 8 where he asks the *agamois* and *cherais* to remain as himself. This suggests that Paul was not married at the time he wrote this letter hence his wish for the *agamois* and *cherais* to remain like him. But there is a change of mind when Paul allows the *agamois* and *cherais* to marry on a condition which is clearly stated in the first part of verse 9. “But if you cannot exercise self-control”. The “you” in the first part of the verse refers to the *agamois* and *cherais* mentioned in verse 8.

As indicated earlier, this is the second time the word “self-control” is used but unlike in verse 5 where it is used generally for married couples. In verse 9, it is specifically used for the *agamois* and *cherais*. The context in which the words “self-control” and “marry” are used for the *agamois* and *cherais* in verses 8 and 9 does not signify a command but rather it paves the way for the people concerned to make a free will of choice whether to marry or not. In this view, the two different occasions on which “self-control” was used to echo the challenge posed by *porneias* in verse 2, and Paul tries to generally respond to those who were not married and the widows in the church of Corinth. The context of his response is not a command from God or a fast rule but a proposal and suggestion which are based on a condition that creates room for individual choice.

Paul’s negative attitude towards *porneias* in verse 2 is intensified in verses 10 and 11. In verses 10 and 11, Paul turns his attention from the unmarried and widows to the married. In verse 10 Paul clearly points to a specific instruction given by the Lord to the wife not to separate from the husband and the husband not to divorce the wife. The use of the two different words *chorithnai* “Separate” in relation to the husband and *aphienai* “divorce”, echoes Deuteronomy 24:1-4 where the husband had the privilege to initiate divorce, unlike the wife. In this light, these words in verse 11 *de kai* and the aorist *choristhe* portray the force of the Greek in the context of the verse and show that once a married woman separates from her husband, she cannot re-marry but can reconcile with the husband.²⁴ This specific instruction from the Lord negates the husband’s privilege to give a certificate of divorce to the wife and send her away as stated in Deuteronomy 24:1-4. The question that comes to mind is “why did Paul state that it is the Lord who instructs the wife and the husband? The possible answer to the question is that Paul seems to consolidate his position against *porneias* in verse 2 and his credence to sexual intercourse within the bond of marriage. It also suggests that divorce and re-marriage are tantamount to *porneias*.

Divorce is again stated in verses 12 - 16. In verse 12, *tois de loipois* “to the rest” as used in relation to the *adelphos* “a brother” and *apiston* “an unbeliever” gives an impression of a mixed marriage in which a Christian brother is married to a non-Christian wife. It suggests that *tois de loipois* refers to the mixed marriage group of the church in Corinth. In the second part of verses 12 and 13 the Christian spouse is not allowed to divorce if his or her non-Christian partner is willing to stay in the marriage. The word *Suneudokei* “approve of; be willing” indicates that the Christian spouse should not divorce if his or her non-Christian partner approves or is willing to stay in the marriage. However, the expression in verse 15, *ei de o apistos chorizetai, chorizestho* which means “But if the unbeliever departs let him leave”, shows a situation where the non-Christian is no longer willing to stay in the marriage. It gives the Christian a free hand to give divorce a chance. The verb *dedoulotai* explains that the Christian spouse is not in bondage or a slave if his or her non-Christian partner is not willing to be

²³ Newman, Jr. *A Concise Greek-English Dictionary of the New Testament*, 89.

²⁴ Barrett, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*.

in the marriage. The questions in verse 16 seem to be rhetorical. The seemingly rhetorical questions are not the premise for which a Christian is permitted to divorce a non-Christian spouse. The key word in verse 16 is *soseis*. The word *sosies* is a present indicative verb and it is expressed in the second person singular which means “save” and it suggests a sense of “salvation” or conversion from one religion to another. The context in which *soseis* is placed in verse 16 cannot render the interpretation of the verse as, a Christian is free to divorce if his or her spouse refuses to convert to the Christian faith. Therefore, verse 16 alone cannot be properly understood without the preceding verse which clearly states why the Christian spouse should allow his or her non-Christian partner to depart. The unwillingness of the non-Christian spouse to remain in the marriage as stated in verse 15 is the premise for divorce but not a conversion to the Christian faith.

Implications for the married and the unmarried in Ghana

Firstly, in the text, marriage is not a commandment from God that binds everybody but it is a proposal made by Paul for those who cannot stay away from *porneias* which is sexual immorality. The implication is that marriage is not a panacea for *porneias* in its different forms but it is considered as one of the means to curb it since it is a problem of the church in Corinth and even cuts across the globe with Ghana, not an exception.

Moreover, married couples are encouraged to see sexual intercourse as a specific and consensus *opheilen* which is a “due” or “role” or “debt” which each spouse should pay for the partner. An appropriate payment or performance of the *opheilen* will definitely go a long way in promoting marital stability which will eventually enhance social harmony for national development.

In addition, a consensual sexual act within the bond of marriage is a vital tool that has the tendency in minimizing marital challenges and problems such as fornication and adultery which are forms of *porneias*. The text explicitly indicates that except for a consensual prayer, a married couple should come together in terms of sexual act meaning no spouse should deny the other sex. A satanic temptation leading to sexual intercourse awaits any married couple who refused to come together after a consensus period of prayer. Again, in view of the sexual act, a spouse has no *exousia* over his or her body but the partner.

Furthermore, in contemporary times where freedom of worship is paramount, especially in Ghana, it is not out of place for a Christian spouse to allow for separation if his or her non-Christian partner is not willing to stay in the marriage. The separation may enhance freedom of worship in their different religious beliefs and practices. On the other hand, a Christian should not separate from his or her spouse who is non-Christian if the partner is willing to stay in the marriage but refuses to convert to the Christian faith.

Lastly, a husband who married more than one wife before converting to the Christian faith should not only consider sexual acts with his first wife as good but with the other wives as sexual immorality. Because he finds himself in the bond of polygynous marriage before becoming a Christian, sexual acts in a marriage must be different from sexual intercourse outside of the bond of marriage which is considered sexual immorality in the text. So, a polygynous husband who becomes a Christian should not consider his sexual relations with his wives as sexual immorality. So, the implication is that if all the wives want to stay in the marriage after his conversion to Christianity, he should allow them to stay for harmonious marriage in order to promote peace in his family and community. There are two issues that lead to challenges, problems and divorce. These issues come when spouses come from different religious backgrounds and their disagreements about sexual acts for which the text gives fruitful instructions for handling them. As indicated earlier, the text deals with the two issues mentioned that divorce is forbidden among Christians and in mixed marriages, separation is not allowed if the non-Christian spouse refuses to convert to the Christian faith except his or her unwillingness to stay in the marriage and no spouse should deny their partner sexual activity.

CONCLUSIONS

The text explicitly shows that marriage is not a commandment from God meanwhile Paul uses it as a proposal for those who cannot do away with sexual immorality. It means marriage is a choice. The text also makes it clear that sex is allowed only in marriage and it is a role each spouse should play without an excuse. Any married couple who refused to come together after a consensus period of prayer can fall into satanic temptations leading to sexual intercourse out of wedlock.

Divorce is highly discouraged but acceptable when the non-Christian spouse is unwilling to stay in the marriage. Here it is improper for a Christian to divorce his or her spouse who fails to convert to the Christian faith. The text also discourages re-marriages when separation occurs but encourages reconciliations anytime separation occurs. Since marriage is not an order from God the unmarried and widows have the free will to decide whether to marry or not but if they cannot exercise self-control marriage is their best option to avoid *porneias*.

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