

1 Corinthians 7:2

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Nevertheless, to avoid fornication, let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband.

Analysis

Nevertheless, to avoid fornication (porneia, πορνεία)—Paul's first qualification acknowledges sexual temptation as a reality. The phrase **let every man have his own wife** uses heautou (ἐαυτοῦ, "his own"), emphasizing exclusive monogamy against Corinth's sexually permissive culture. This is not a low view of marriage as merely preventing sin, but a realistic acknowledgment of human sexuality.

Marriage provides the God-ordained context for sexual fulfillment. Paul's pastoral wisdom recognizes that while singleness offers advantages for ministry (vv. 32-35), attempting celibacy without the corresponding gift (charisma, v. 7) leads to sexual sin. The imperative echétō (ἐχέτω, "let him have") indicates marriage is not merely permitted but positively commanded for those burning with desire (v. 9).

This verse counters both the Corinthian ascetics who disparaged marriage and any notion that sexual desire itself is sinful. God created human sexuality, and marriage is His provision for its expression—neither a concession to weakness nor a second-class calling.

Historical Context

Corinth was notorious for sexual immorality, with temple prostitution at the Aphrodite shrine and a culture that celebrated extramarital sexuality. Against this backdrop, Paul affirms that Christian marriage involves exclusive, mutual sexual faithfulness—a countercultural message in both pagan and ascetic contexts.

Related Passages

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

Study Questions

1. How does Paul's teaching challenge both permissiveness and prudishness about sexuality within marriage?
2. What does it mean that marriage is God's design for sexual expression rather than a "necessary evil"?
3. How should the church discuss sexuality in ways that honor both the goodness of marriage and the calling to singleness?

Interlinear Text

διὰ	δὲ	τὰς	πορνείας	ἐκάστη	τὴν	ἑαυτοῦ	
Nevertheless	G1161	G3588	to avoid fornication	every man	G3588	his own	
G1223			G4202	G1538		G1438	
γυναῖκα	ἔχέτω	καὶ	ἐκάστη	τὸν	ἴδιον	ἄνδρα	ἔχέτω
wife	have	and	every man	G3588	her own	husband	have
G1135	G2192	G2532	G1538		G2398	G435	G2192

Additional Cross-References

Ephesians 5:28 (Parallel theme): So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself.

Ephesians 5:33 (Parallel theme): Nevertheless let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself; and the wife see that she reverence her husband.

1 Corinthians 7:9 (Parallel theme): But if they cannot contain, let them marry: for it is better to marry than to burn.

Proverbs 18:22 (Parallel theme): Whoso findeth a wife findeth a good thing, and obtaineth favour of the LORD.

1 Corinthians 6:18 (Parallel theme): Flee fornication. Every sin that a man doeth is without the body; but he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body.

Proverbs 19:14 (Parallel theme): House and riches are the inheritance of fathers: and a prudent wife is from the LORD.

1 Timothy 4:3 (Parallel theme): 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.

Malachi 2:14 (Parallel theme): Yet ye say, Wherefore? Because the LORD hath been witness between thee and the wife of thy youth, against whom thou hast dealt treacherously: yet is she thy companion, and the wife of thy covenant.

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