

The South Florida Avenue **MESSENGER**

A Friendly Church With a Vital Message Proclaiming the Unsearchable Riches of the Lord Jesus.

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SUNDAY SERVICES

Bible Study.....9:30 a.m.
Worship.....10:30 a.m.
Evening Worship.....6:00 p.m.

WEDNESDAY

Ladies Class.....10:00 a.m.
Bible Study.....7:00 p.m.

HOME OF

Florida School of Preaching
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MISSION FIELDS

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IN
SEARCH
OF THE LORD'S WAY

Sundays @ 8:30 a.m. Check local listings

First Corinthians 7:39-40

If a Widow Remarries, Must She Marry Only a Christian?

Brian R. Kenyon

Next to the “not under bondage” issue (1 Cor. 7:15), this section on widows’ marrying “only in the Lord” is probably the most controversial section in First Corinthians 7. As with any other passage in the Bible, popular opinions, strong emotions, and/or prejudices should not be allowed to determine its meaning. Rather, we should allow the passage itself, along with its context and the total teaching of the Bible, to determine its meaning. Such is the basis of the study below, the final study in this series on First Corinthians 7.

The Verses in Their Context

As Paul closed this important chapter concerning expediencies of marriage, he said to the widows, “A wife is bound by law as long as her husband lives; but if her husband dies, she is at liberty to be married to whom she wishes, only in the Lord. ⁴⁰But she is happier if she remains as she is, according to my judgment—and I think I also have the Spirit of God” (1 Cor. 7:39-40). Paul reminded his readers that marriage is to be permanent (cf. 1 Cor. 7:10-11; Gen. 2:18-25; Mt. 19:3-9). A wife is “bound” to her husband as long as he lives! As shown in earlier articles, “bound” is from the Greek word (*deo*), which means to be tied. “Under bondage” (1 Cor. 7:15), on the other hand, is from a different word (*douloo*), which means to be enslaved. Marriage was never intended by God to be a slave relationship (cf. 1 Cor. 7:3-5). If a wife’s husband dies, then she is free from that marriage and may remarry with God’s approval, if she so chooses (cf. Rom. 7:2-3). However, Paul said, “she is happier if she remains as she is,” a widow (unmarried). Again, the “present distress” was why Paul recommended remaining unmarried throughout this chapter (1 Cor. 7:26, 28). Although this was Paul’s judgment (cf. 1 Cor. 7:25), he was an inspired apostle, and it must be taken seriously!

Is “Only in the Lord” the Same As “Only a Christian”?

In English, “only in the Lord” can modify either the person whom she marries (adjectival phrase) or the action of marriage itself (adverbial phrase). Thus, there are basically two views on “only in the Lord” in this passage. First, *(continued on page 2)*

those who affirm that it modifies “whom she wishes” (adjectival phrase) teach that the widow is free to remarry only a Christian. According to this view, “in the Lord” refers to a Christian (cf. Rom. 16:11; Eph. 6:21). Second, those who affirm that it modifies “to be married” (adverbial phrase) teach that the widow is free to remarry only in harmony with the Lord’s will. Thus, according to this view, “in the Lord” modifies the “action” of marriage rather than the “whom” of marriage. “In the Lord” is definitely used this way (as an adverb) elsewhere (Eph. 6:1; Col. 3:18). The widow, therefore, can remarry only one who is Scripturally eligible (i.e., one who has never been married, one whose spouse has died, or one who is innocent of fornication in a Scriptural divorce).

Fortunately, the original language of the New Testament sheds much light so that we can know the truth. Like English, Greek adjectives modify nouns and pronouns (i.e., “whom she wishes”), whereas adverbs modify verbs (i.e., “to be married”). In First Corinthians 7:39, the Greek adjective translated “only” (from *monos*) is in the neuter form (*monon*). In Greek, an adjective must agree in gender with the noun or pronoun that it modifies. A neuter adjective does not modify a masculine pronoun. “Whom,” in “whom she wishes,” is obviously masculine. According to one Greek authority, when a Greek adjective is used in the neuter gender without there being a neuter noun or pronoun, then it is being “used as an adverb ... limiting the action or state to the one designated by the verb” (Bauer 528). Thus, “only in the Lord” modifies the “act,” not the “whom,” of marriage!

Harmonizing the Context & the Bible’s Total Teaching

Not only does the Greek language indicate that “only in the Lord” is being used as an adverbial phrase (thus modifying “to be married,” rather than “whom she wishes”), this also harmonizes best with the universal application of God’s law on marriage. To be sure, all Christians (not just widows) should seek to marry Christians (cf. Mt. 5:13-16; 6:33; Col. 3:1-2). Those whom we marry have a great influence upon us, and may ultimately affect our eternal destiny (cf. 1 Kgs. 16:31; 21:25). However, it is possible that no Christian spouse is available, and if one cannot exercise the necessary self-control, he or she must marry (1 Cor. 7:2, 9).

Furthermore, the “only a Christian” view must assume that the widow in verse 39 is a Christian, or else it would be forcing non-Christian widows to marry Christians. However, the text nowhere states such. The only place in this chapter where Paul distinguishes Christians and non-Christians is in verses 12-15. Would we say the husband in verse 3 is limited to only a Christian husband? Is the wife in verse 4 only a Christian wife? Are the “unmarried” and “widows” in verse 8 only Christians? Of course not! Then why assume that the widow in verse 39 is a Christian? The “widow can marry only a Christian” view actually makes this verse only apply to Christians (i.e., a “covenant passage”), or else, again, the passage would be teaching even non-Christian widows must marry Christians! However, the Bible teaches that God’s laws of marriage apply to all people, regardless of whether they are Christians (Gen. 2:24; Mt. 19:3-9). The view that “only in the Lord” modifies the action of marriage, thus allowing the widow to marry only one who is Scripturally eligible, can be universally applied to all widows, Christian or not! If Paul meant for widows to marry only Christians, why did he not tell Timothy (1 Tim. 5:14)?

Some might object by referring to Paul’s statement that he had a right to “take along a believing wife [a sister, KJV], as do also the other apostles” (1 Cor. 9:5). This statement, however, must be considered in the context of Paul’s right to be supported by the church as he labored in the Gospel. It would be inappropriate for the church to support a non-believing wife to labor in the Gospel. Only the faithful can teach the faith faithfully! Again, it may be best for Christians to marry Christians when possible, but a Christian spouse may not always be available!

Conclusion

Marriage is sometimes a controversial issue, especially when it comes to Christians and whom they marry. Again, it is usually better for Christians to marry Christians (Mt. 6:33; Col. 3:1-2), but what is better is not always what is exclusively Scriptural, for other options can also fall within Scriptural parameters (cf. 1 Cor. 7:38). When it comes to marriage, or any other Bible subject, let us be sure that we only bind where God has bound and that we loose where God has loosed! *A Brian*

Works Cited

Bauer, Walter. *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*. 2nd rev. ed. Eds. William F. Arndt, F. Wilbur Gingrich, and Frederick W. Danker. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979.

SFA FAMILY MATTERS

Prayer List

Our Members: Ray Nashick is in the hospital with pneumonia, but out of ICU. Kathy Sweeney will have a laser procedure on both eyes this week. Ginny Hamby, Brenda Murray, Wayne Shearer, Sharon Washington, Dorothy Trice, Faith West, Jim Turner, and Margaret Coone.

Shut In Members: Carol Eason, Virginia Plumlee, Dick & Joyce Burbage and Cheryl Barker.

Others: Wayne Shearer's parents, Paulisky Irizarry, Sandra Hutchins, Lynn Stevens, Chrissi Fuesner, Kim, (Daniel Stump's cousin), Paula (Brenda Murray's daughter), Debbie Bush's son, Linda Sheffield (Ginny Hamby's sister in law), Chip Bolding, Tony Seibert, Peggy Nabors (member at Orange Street), Richard Coone (Margaret's brother), and Bob Shaw (fiance to Wayne Shearer's sister).

Upcoming Events

Saturday March 9th: Youth group devo & service project.

Saturday March 9th: Ladies Day at the Maricamp Road church of Christ in Ocala at 8:30 a.m.

Sunday March 10th: Daylight Savings Begins! Don't forget to spring your clocks forward!!

Sunday March 10th: Elders/Deacons meeting at 4:30 p.m.

March 10th-14th: Spring Gospel Meeting at the Sixth Street church of Christ. The speaker will be Bill Davis.

March 10th-13th: PTP Spark weekend, Orange Park, FL

Saturday, March 16th: Men's breakfast/Semi-annual picnic & singing Jackson Ave church of Christ.

Tuesday March 19th: FSOP Ladies class at 7:00 p.m.

Saturday, March 30th: Door knocking for gospel meeting.

March 31-April 3rd: SFA's Spring Gospel Meeting with Lee Jamieson.

Saturday April 6th: Save the Date: SFA Ladies Brunch.

Placed Membership

Neil Entwistle requested to place membership with us. Please welcome him to our family.

Baptism and Response

We rejoice with the baptism of Wanda Holmes on Saturday March 2nd. Also Sharon Washington responded and asked the prayers of the congregation.

Volunteers

On the bulletin board is some info on some areas of work needed. Areas include bulletin boards, visitor bags, taking communion to shut-ins, etc. Let the office know if you can help. Also we are in need of bottles of water for the pantry!

Sympathy

John McShane's sister, Margaret Elizabeth Ontso, passed away on Monday Feb. 25th. Please keep John and Linda and his family in your prayers.

Visitors

Sherman Williams, Eric Bunch, Haley Pack, Teresa Murrell, Jack & Donna Martin, Denise Wilson, Clyde & Dolly Griffith, Tommie Jackson, Marsha McBride, Tiffany Hash, Megan and Samuel.

SCHEDULED TO SERVE

March

David Anderson **Table** Kyle Faneuf
Jeff Bingle **Assist** Frank Hamby

Sunday, March 10 2019
9:30 A.M.

Song at Bible Class..... Paul Romine
Prayer..... David Williams

10:30 A.M.

Announcements Matt Willcut
Song Leader..... Jason Hendrix
Opening Prayer..... John McShane
Sermon..... Hiram Kemp
Closing Prayer Wadi Khoury
Sound Booth..... Casey Paulin

6:00 P.M.

Song Leader..... Paul Romine
Opening Prayer..... Kenny French
Sermon..... Hiram Kemp
Closing Prayer..... Alex Parramore
Sound Booth..... Casey Paulin
Greeters Dix/McShane
Att. Cards..... Willcut boys
Open & Close Building Wayne Shearer

Wednesday, March 13, 2019

Song Leader..... Steve Hunley
Opening Prayer..... Kyle Bingle
Closing Prayer..... Charles Paulin

Please meet in the library. If you cannot serve, please call Stacey Paulin so he can get a replacement - (863) 838-8911

Sunday, March 17, 2019
9:30 A.M.

Song at Bible Class..... Jim Turner
Prayer Bobby Sheemaker

10:30 A.M.

Announcements Matt Willcut
Song Leader..... Jason Hendrix
Opening Prayer..... Wesley Brunson
Sermon..... Hiram Kemp
Closing Prayer Jim Edmondson
Sound Booth..... Alex Parramore

6:00 P.M.

Song Leader..... Paul Romine
Opening Prayer..... Wayne Shearer
Sermon..... Hiram Kemp
Closing Prayer Ken Walker
Sound Booth..... Alex Parramore
Greeters Fife/Brenda & Darlene
Att. Cards..... Caelen/Camron
Open & Close Building Wayne Shearer

Wednesday, March 20, 2019

Song Leader..... David Williams
Opening Prayer..... John McShane
Closing Prayer..... Alex Parramore

~ HOW ARE WE GIVING ~

Feb. 10..... \$12,749.03
Feb. 17..... \$4,789.25
Feb. 24..... \$7,291.13
Mar. 03 \$7,128.06
Contribution Average..... \$6,906.61
Weekly Budget..... \$6,524.52



New Member Spotlight
Kyle Fanuef



Kyle was born in Winter Haven and grew up in Polk County. As a child, he wanted to be a veterinarian. His first job was mowing lawns. He currently works as an agent in his family's insurance office. He has visited Panama, Mexico, and the Bahamas. In his free time, he likes to play Fortnite, ride his motorcycle, work out, and watch TV with his wife. His most satisfying accomplishment is his marriage. The best advice he's been given is "Listen to all criticism; fix what is broken; and ignore the rest." He and his wife, Amanda, live in Lake Wales. Welcome to SFA!



Member Spotlight
Marissa Estridge



Marissa was born in Lakeland, and has lived here all her life. As a child, she wanted to be an EMT. Her first job was as a lifeguard. She is currently a teacher at Lake Gibson Middle School. She has visited Puerto Rico, Dominican Republic, and Canada. In her free time, she likes to spend time with her family and go to Disney. Her most satisfying accomplishment is her daughter, Maddox. The best advice she's been given is from her dad: "If you're going to do something, do it right the first time." She and her husband, Josh, have one daughter.



South Florida Avenue
CHURCH OF CHRIST
1807 South Florida Avenue
Lakeland, FL 33803-2653

Return Service Requested

The End of Your Search for a Friendly Church . . .

WE REJOICE AT THE BAPTISM



of Wanda on Saturday, March 2, 2019. Much of her learning the truth involved viewing sermons on our YouTube channel. We thank Jason Hendrix and Alex Parramore for their work in this area, sowing the seed in electronic formats!



SFA on the move, visiting North Lakeland's meeting with our own, George Beals (left) and Okeechobee's meeting with Neal Pollard (right). Great learning & fellowship was enjoyed by all!

South Florida Avenue church of Christ

Spring Gospel Meeting

March 31 - April 3, 2019

"Raised in Christ"

Sunday Bible class, 9:30 am. - "Obedience From the Heart"
 Romans 6

Sunday worship, 10:30 am - "If You Have Been Raised"
 Colossians 3:1-4

Fellowship meal to follow

Sunday worship, 6:00 pm - "Called Saints"
 1 Corinthians 1:5-10

Monday, 7:00 pm - "Making Pancakes"
 Matthew 28:18 - 20

Tuesday, 7:00 pm - "Some days..."
 John 1:21-57

Wednesday, 7:00 pm. - "King of the Ages"
 1 Timothy 1:12-20



Lee Jamieson

Timberlane church of Christ