

INTRODUCTION – 1 CORINTHIANS CHAPTER SEVEN

This chapter is apportioned with four (4) sections in the bible that reveal Paul's messages to the Corinthians for our study, understanding, obedience, blessings and edification.

1. Principles of Marriage: **1 Corinthians 7:1 – 9**
2. Keep Your Marriage vows: **1 Corinthians 7:10 – 16**
3. Live as You are called: **1 Corinthians 7:17 – 24**
4. To the Unmarried and Widows: **1 Corinthians 7:25 – 40**

Clearly it portrays Paul as the spiritual father to the Church of Corinth with interest and passion to the faith of the Corinthian Believers, Christian teachings and doctrines, spiritual growth and maturity.

The first section emphasized on the principles of marriage as a solution to the reported sexual immorality in the Church of Corinth. In righteous counsel, he advocated for affection between spouses as an obligation and not an option. As part of the marriage union and obligation, this was to be a frequent practice and should only be put on hold only during prayer and fasting days. This was to serve as a check against Satan's subtle way of luring couples into committing sex outside marriage.

To the unmarried and widows who were like him, Paul advocated for their singleness status with marriage but was quick to add that they could marry if they lacked self – control of their sexual desires and passion. Indeed for the sake of the kingdom of God, Paul wished that all men were like him but also admitted that each of them had received own gift from God to be unmarried, married and widow and widowed.

The second section emphasized on keeping marriage vows as a commandment received from the Lord. He charged the Church of Corinth to have a marriage policy where husbands and wives could not divorce one another as Believing Christians. In other words, marriage vows were to be enforced lovingly to have mutual respects and benefits.

Also Paul used righteous counsel to maintain peace and harmony between Believing spouses and Unbelieving spouses. As long as they were willingly to live together, divorce was out of the picture. But divorce should be permitted for the unbelieving spouse who wants to leave the marriage for the sake of obtaining eternal life and being in a position to perform eternal works by the Holy Spirit.

He revealed further that the Believing spouse sanctified the Unbelieving spouse to even make their children sanctified and holy to God. For God is a promoter of peace and not

chaos. He noted also that the wisdom of God is designed to make the favour, power and glory in the lives of Believing spouses transform and change unbelieving spouses to Believers.

The third section emphasized on Believers to live their lives as called by the Lord. Paul made a strong case using the tradition of circumcision of the Jews and the tradition of uncircumcision of the Gentiles. Since both Jews and Gentiles believed the gospel of Jesus Christ, he counseled the Church of Corinth to accept Believers in their state as circumcised or uncircumcised. To him, keeping the commandments of God is most important to God.

Again Paul counseled the Church of Corinth to accept the status of Believers as slaves or freed people. He counseled them to use their freedom received in Christ to be set free if possible. Besides, the revelation is that the slavery status of a Believer is the Lord's freedman. Likewise the revelation of one called as a freedman is the Lord's slave. By this truth, he stated that our sense of belonging is Christ who paid the big price of death on the Cross and redeemed us from sin, and the devil, and the curse of the law unto Himself.

The fourth section emphasized on additional instructions to the unmarried and widows in the Church of Corinth and all other Churches known to Paul. He revealed that the world's persecution of the Church did not favour married people at all. Hence couples were to remain in their marriages whereas divorced couples were not to remarry. But this position of Paul was not against the institution of marriage. Rather it pointed out the foreseeable challenges against all Believing Christians whether married or unmarried or divorced. Paul's righteous motive was to avert distraction of one's Christian faith and service in total commitment and faithfulness.

In other words, Paul's righteous instructions and counsels were to enable the Corinthians Believers make wise decisions with regards to giving their daughters in marriage or not to men. By this truth, their eternal salvation and eternal contributions to the kingdom of God was to be guaranteed despite what he called the "present distress".

To enable readers and the Churches and Body of Christ as a whole understand the seventh chapter of Paul's epistle, I have done my best with the grace of God upon my life and ministry to explain verse by verse or combination of verses in bringing out the quality of Paul's messages to the Corinthians.

Like a weaned child just weaned from milk and drawn from the breasts, the word of God is taught precept upon precept, line upon line, here a little, there a little **(Isaiah 28:9 & 10)**. Jesus said that when the Holy Spirit comes, He shall guide us unto all truths **(John 16:13)**.

Connect to other writings of the Church and bible commentaries as the Holy Spirit enlightens your understanding because grace and truth emanated from our Lord Jesus Christ **(John 1:17)**. For this study, additional biblical information from the New King James Bible Commentary added fresh revelations to enhance understanding.

Study and know its relevance to your life first as a Christian before you apply it to other Believing Christians, Church workers, Church leaders, Ministers and Christian leaders. I trust God that you will be equipped with His knowledge and continuous belief in Christ's salvation work on the cross as tied to obedience, knowledge, spiritual wisdom, humility, spiritual growth and maturity. You are not alone because the Holy Spirit is Your Helper.

The focus here is your obedience to gain insight and understanding of Paul's messages unto spiritual growth and maturity of the Church. It is my prayer and hope that you shall be an instrument in the Lord's service to bring sound Christian teachings and practices to your local Church and Body of Christ. In Jesus' name. Amen. Hallelujah!

SETTLE PROBLEMS OF IMMORALITY, COUNSEL TO MARRY

INSPIRATION

Church leaders must have capacity to solve problems whenever they are presented to them. This is the mark of true leadership to retain the number and even increase the number. Hence the righteous counsel for men and women in the Church to marry and be saved from the bondage of sexual immoralities (**Proverbs 18:22**). For holiness unto the Lord is a command and not an option (**1 Peter 1:15 & 16**). Let's study further.

1 Corinthians 7:1 & 2 – Now concerning the things of which you wrote to me: It is good for a man not to touch a woman. Nevertheless, because of sexual immorality, let each man have his own wife, and let each woman have her own husband.

The beginning of **chapter 7** revealed that Paul had just finished answering questions from Chloe's household about divisions: **Now concerning the things of which you wrote to me (1 Corinthians 7:1a)**. Now he championed the fight against sexual immoralities in the Church of Corinth using the same word of God; the gospel of Jesus Christ as his major response and summary.

He stated clearly that it is not good for a man to touch a woman: **1 Corinthians 7:1b – Now concerning the things of which you wrote to me: It is good for a man not to touch a woman.**

By this position, he meant not to touch a woman in a way that makes you sexually immoral. This includes kissing the mouth, touching the breasts, buttocks, back, neck, head, clitoris, rubbing the ties and legs, hugs in a romantic way, anus sex, and also having sex with moans and excitement. This can be called fornication or adultery or romance or sexual immorality and it is contrary to the word of God; the gospel of Jesus Christ once it is outside marriage.

Other immoralities besides the touch of a woman by a man is same sex sexual relationships such as lesbianism, homosexuals/gays, masturbation, anus sex instead of penis entering the vagina, rapists and pedophiles and are all abominations to God.

The words of Jesus is a reminder to all of us that looking at a woman lustfully to have romance and sex with her is committed adultery in the heart (**Matthew 5:27 & 28**). It buttresses the message of Paul to the Corinthians Believers that touching a woman lustfully means to have had sexual thoughts and a mindset about it already and this is adultery.

Indeed the heart of a righteous leader is tailored to the benefit of the people. Paul's solution to the problem of sexual immoralities in the Church of Corinth was to

emphasize on the institution of marriage by God in the Garden of Eden (**Genesis 2:20 – 25**).

Therefore Paul's solution was his righteous instruction and counsel for all eligible men and women to have their own spouses. That is to marry and enjoy sex with them in a holy manner pleasing and acceptable to God. It means to say that enjoyment and satisfaction of bodily pleasure as ordained by God can all be attained in a marriage union between a man and a woman. For just as sexual immoralities defile members of the Church and Body of Christ, holiness also makes us acceptable to God and makes the Church glorious with God's presence. The bible says that marriage is honourable among all, and the bed undefiled; but fornicators and adulterers God will judge (**Hebrews 13:4**).

Earlier Paul had stated that our bodies are temple of the Holy Spirit and therefore we cannot use our bodies carelessly in the sin of sexual immoralities (**1 Corinthians 6:19**). Hence the righteous charge to glorify God in body and spirit as we have been purchased and sanctified by the price Jesus paid on the Cross of Calvary

The Holy Spirit directs and speaks the mind of Christ. Therefore Apostle Paul instructed that though sex is a physical activity, it should be evident between married couples; husband and wife, and not single men and women, boys and girls, as pertains in generations. However, his choice of celibacy was purposely for the gospel of Jesus Christ and not a divine instruction for all Christians. That was the conclusive message, debate and story of sex in the Church among Christians.

BE DISCERNING! HAVE THE MIND OF CHRIST AND GODLY DESIRE TO ENJOY SEX SUMPTUOUSLY ONLY IN MARRIAGE. (ROMANS 12:1 & 2)

THE MARRIAGE UNION AND FAMILY SETTING PROVIDE A PICTURE OF DIVINITY WITH HUMANITY.

THE WORD OF GOD QUICKENS AND BRING RESULTS

New King James Bible Commentary: It is not good for a man to touch a woman – Corinthian Doctrines: Two schools of thought and belief system existed among the Corinthian Christians concerning fornication and adultery.

One believed falsely the separation of the spiritual from the physical. That spiritual things had no connection between the divine and the physical and neither of them affected the other. You could sin and it affects only your body and not your spiritual life.

The second group believed strongly that all spiritual things are of God and good but all physical things are bad. On this premise, they believed that the promotion of all spiritual things as Christians should be suppressed by any physical desire

even for sex. The practice of celibacy was tailored along this line of school of thought especially when it fitted into Apostle Paul's situation as his choice.

Paul corrects their misunderstanding here and explains that while sexual relationships are good, he chose celibacy to his own personal situation.

Clearly Paul's message was to the Corinthians not to touch a woman. It meant not to be sexually immoral because our bodies are now temple of the Holy Spirit. It is of the same measure and understanding that Jesus told the woman caught in adultery to go and sin no more **(John 8:1 – 12)**.

Get your own husband; Get your own wife: In response, the Apostle of Jesus Christ simply revealed the need, importance and promotion of sexual relationship in marriage and not outside it. **GET YOUR OWN HUSBAND; GET YOUR OWN WIFE**. This was the only way for the practice of sexual immoralities in the Church like fornication, adultery, sodomy, lesbianism, homosexuals, masturbation, coveting people's husbands and wives to be stopped and meet God's standard of holiness and righteousness. Besides, the residence and power of the Holy Spirit in the bodies of Christians are possible only when we shy away from sexual sins.

Emulating Paul's righteous examples, Church leadership must not end at the diagnosis and rebuke stages but at solution stage. We are to tell Church members struggling with sexual sins to look for their own spouses and enjoy sex as part of their marital responsibilities. We must counsel marriage spouses to look attractive to one another in physical looks, beauty, as well as communication and respect for one another to set the pace for sexual relationships when necessary.

CHURCH LEADERS SHOULD ENCOURAGE AND SUPPORT MEN AND WOMEN IN THE CHURCHES TO MARRY.

New King James Bible Commentary: Because of the rampant morality in Corinth, Paul encouraged those who might be tempted to commit sexual sins to marry. It is better to develop a permanent relationship with a wife or husband than to lapse into sexual sin.

PRAYER

Dear God, you instituted marriage between a man and a woman.

Help us identify our rightful partners and marry them to overcome also the spirit of immorality especially among the youth, young adults and some elderly people.

We pray that Your word and Holy Spirit will continue to work on our hearts and minds to have the mind of Christ and Paul not to be sexually immoral and make

Your Church a holy place with prayers, teachings, counseling and works and fruit of the Spirit.

In Jesus' name. Amen

WHEN WE ARE CONVICTED BY GOD'S WORD AND HOLY SPIRIT THAT THE BODY IS NOT FOR SEXUAL IMMORALITY, WE WILL FIND OUR OWN SPOUSES AND ENJOY SEXUAL RELATIONSHIPS IN A RIGHTEOUS MANNER, AND MAKE OUR HOMES AND CHURCHES HOLY FOR THE FATHER AND SON TO ABIDE WITH US. **NANA KWAKU DUODU**

SEX IN MARRIAGE IS A DUTY: CHECK SEXUAL ABUSES

INSPIRATION

Church leaders must have capacity to solve problems whenever they are presented to them. This is the mark of true leadership to retain the number and even increase the number. Hence the righteous counsel for men and women in the Church to marry and be saved from the bondage of sexual immoralities (**Proverbs 18:22**). For holiness unto the Lord is a command and not an option (**1 Peter 1:15 & 16**). Let's study further.

1 Corinthians 7:3 – 5 Let the husband render to his wife the affection due her, and likewise also the wife to her husband. The wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does. And likewise the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does. Do not deprive one another except with consent for a time, that you may give yourselves to fasting and prayer; and come together again so that Satan does not tempt you because of your lack of self-control.

The main parts of Paul's message are in four parts. The first part says that both husband and wife must render due affection to one another and must be culminated in sex. We read

1 Corinthians 7:3 – Let the husband render to his wife the affection due her, and likewise also the wife to her husband.

It means husbands and wives to love and share and sing love poems and songs to each other as between Solomon and the Shulamite woman. The bible says that Isaac loved Rebekah and was comforted by her presence when the mother Sarah died (**Genesis 26:47**). Hold hands and embrace (**Song of Solomon 3:5c, 2:6, 8:3**), romantically caress her breasts (**Proverbs 5:19, Song of Solomon 1:13, 4:5, 7:3, 7 & 8, 8:10**), kiss (**Song of Solomon 1:2**), care as a husband and wife. The bible says that king Abimelech of Gerard saw Isaac showing love, affection and romance to his wife Rebekah after telling the Philistines that she was her sister (**Genesis 26:8 – 11**). Therefore show love and romance to your spouse and build trust in the marriage relationship.

The second part says that both husband and wife do not have authority over their own bodies but their spouses have that authority. We read

1 Corinthians 7:4 – The wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does. And likewise the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does.

Here Paul says that a married person must surrender bodily rights in marriage to his or her spouse. Your own body must not be subject to your rules when it is to be enjoyed by

your spouse. Don't let salon beauty of your new hairstyle prevent your husband from touching you if he needs affection and sex. Don't let foods and drinks deny your wife the enjoyment of your body as a husband if she needs affection and sex. In other words, make your body attractive always for your spouse to enjoy it. That is why newly married couples give their bodies nakedly to one another breaking their virginity without shame but confidently and honourably **(Genesis 2:23 – 25)**. Is it true that only few virgins get to the level of marriage before breaking their virginities? Whatever when one becomes born again, I believe he or she is a virgin to God and that is what matters as the current state.

The third part is that both husband and wife are not to deprive one another of sex for a time and avert satanic control and manipulations to commit adultery. We read

1 Corinthians 7:5a – Do not deprive one another except with consent for a time, that you may give yourselves to fasting and prayer

They were not to use sex as a form of punishment of their spouses like unbelievers with their own set of rules. In Christ, marriage is not just a social contract but divinely approved by God. Paul reminds them strongly of their marital obligations with sexual union playing a vital role. The bible tells us to drink water from our own cistern or running water from your own well **(Proverbs 5:15)**. And do not be sexually active everywhere by going beyond the borders of your spouse to abroad **(Proverbs 5:16)**.

The fourth part is that both husband and wife must reconnect their sexual life because of lack of self – control. We read

1 Corinthians 7:5b – and come together again so that Satan does not tempt you because of your lack of self-control.

It shows that only few marriage couples have the ability to control their sexual drives for some time without engaging in sexual immoralities. Remember this message was to Holy Spirit filled Believing Christians and not to unbelievers and sinners. Indeed the Corinthian society was morally corrupt and occasionally penetrated into the Church. Hence awareness creation in the area of bearing the fruit of self – control, patience and discipline **(Galatians 5:23b)**. Be careful. What happened to David and Bathsheba can also happen to you **(2 Samuel 11:1 – 5)** if not by the grace of God; self – control.

Apostle Paul's solution in the Corinthian Church was both spiritual and physical. That is rendering affection to spouses in a romantic and sexual manner for mutual satisfaction. For all the sexual sins in the Church to be eliminated, husbands and wives were counseled to be enjoying good sex unless by mutual consent for a while like prayers and fastings. This should be duty bound like a security personnel or a worker in a company or organization or the Church on the mission of Jesus Christ **(Matthew 28:18 – 20)**.

DO NOT DEMONIZED SEX IN MARRIAGE BECAUSE IT IS NECESSARY, GOOD AND RIGHTEOUS IN GOD'S SIGHT AND THE HOLY SPIRIT ENDORSES IT.

It should be commitment to the marriage relationship and not showmanship of male or female dominance to deprive one another. As Christian couples, your bodies are to be given, explored and enjoyed by each other and not for deprivation at self – will. One of the qualities of King Solomon was his romantic expressions and adoration of his lovers. No wonder, the women loved and went after him.

COUPLES MUST READ AND MEDITATE ON THE SONGS OF SOLOMON AND ACT STRONGLY ON THE SEVEN CHAPTERS TO SWEETEN THEIR MARRIAGES.

The Apostle Paul emphasized the need for couples to have sex again after spiritual and periodic exercises as a check against Satan's manipulation to commit the sin of sexual immoralities by people in the Church. This is the check against challenges of self – control over lust and sex; that is people who burn with passion uncontrollably.

We read

1 Peter 3:7 – Husbands, likewise, dwell with them with understanding, giving honor to the wife, as to the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life, that your prayers may not be hindered.

As Christians, husbands are to see their wives as the weaker sex with special needs and attention. Therefore, husbands are to live, discuss, listen, understand, respect and honour their wives for their prayers to be heard. This is also applicable to wives towards their husbands to love and respect them.

New King James Bible Commentary: Affection – Husbands and wives have a duty to maintain sexual relations with each other so that neither will be tempted by Satan to have sex outside of marriage.

It means to emphasize on this truth that the devil is very good at making husbands and wives commit adultery and disobeying **Hebrews 13:4** through sexual lusts and hardships in life; no money, joblessness, barrenness, home, family rejection, friends rejection, pressure from superiors on the job and even at the Church level. Hence prayer, counseling, financial and resource supports are inevitable as solutions and making of righteous decisions. Never use denial of sex in marriage to punish your spouse because of anger or revenge because it is a formidable weapon of the devil that has chalked success throughout the generations.

PRAYER

Dear God, You have taught us through Your word that all the goodness and sweetness in sex are embedded in marriages between men and women.

Protect and preserve Christian marriages through Your word, wisdom, counsels, and might to ensure fruitful marriages and avert the danger of submission to sexual immoralities.

Help us to bear the fruit of Self – Control by the Holy Spirit. In Jesus' name. Amen. **(Galatians 5:23b).**

DO NOT GO LOOKING FOR SEX AT BROTHELS, NIGHT CLUBS, STREETS, NEIGHBOURHOOD AND OTHER PLACES. RATHER ENJOY SEX IN MARRIAGE AS GOD HAS ORDAINED IT. WISE CHRISTIANS WORK AT THEIR MARRIAGES AND DO NOT ABUSE THEIR SPOUSES. **NANA KWAKU DUODU**

NEVER USE DENIAL OF SEX IN MARRIAGE TO PUNISH YOUR SPOUSE BECAUSE OF ANGER OR REVENGE BECAUSE IT IS A FORMIDABLE WEAPON OF THE DEVIL THAT HAS CHALKED SUCCESS THROUGHOUT THE GENERATIONS. RATHER LOVE AND SHOW AFFECTION THROUGH SEXUAL CONTACTS AND ENJOYMENTS. **NANA KWAKU DUODU**

MAKING GOD'S WILL YOUR WILL; MARRIAGE IS PREFERRED TO SEXUAL IMMORALITIES

INSPIRATION

The leader must initiate solutions to solve problems and must apply wisdom to maintain the fold even with strong measures in place. The bible says that wisdom is the principal thing and therefore we should grab it with understanding as we seek other virtues in life **(Proverbs 4:7)**.

According to the English dictionary, a concession is something that is allowed or given up, often in order to end a disagreement. A commandment is a divine rule such as the Ten Commandments **(Exodus 20:1 – 17)**. Let's study further.

1 Corinthians 7:6 – 9 But I say this as a concession, not as a commandment. For I wish that all men were even as I myself. But each one has his own gift from God, one in this manner and another in that. But I say to the unmarried and to the widows: It is good for them if they remain even as I am; but if they cannot exercise self-control, let them marry. For it is better to marry than to burn with passion.

Apostle Paul's message was not to impose his will on the Church but establish God's will in Christ and the Holy Spirit. Biblical concession is an act and offer of favour in response to a rightful demand or request that would promote righteousness as a Christian.

We read

1 Corinthians 7:6 – But I say this as a concession, not as a commandment.

The given concession by Paul was that all men had the opportunity to be like him and remain single. This had the eternal benefits of worshipping and serving the Lord faithfully.

We read

1 Corinthians 7:7 – For I wish that all men were even as I myself. But each one has his own gift from God, one in this manner and another in that.

Yet Paul realized that the Church was filled with people of different gifts from God to make eternal contributions. In other words, not all the people could walk in his footsteps of celibacy but had to marry or lived as married people.

PAUL'S OFFER OF CELIBACY TO THE CHURCH OF CORINTH WAS A CONCESSION AND NOT A COMMANDMENT OF THE LORD. HIS RIGHTEOUS

INTENT WAS TO MAKE THEM SERVE THE LORD FAITHFULLY LIKE HIM WITHOUT ANY ATTACHED STRINGS OF SEXUAL IMMORALITIES. HOWEVER, HE RECOGNIZED THE PLACE OF VARIED GIFTS FROM GOD WORKING IN THE LIVES AND MINISTRIES OF BELIEVING CHRISTIANS.

We read

1 Corinthians 7:8 – But I say to the unmarried and to the widows: It is good for them if they remain even as I am

To the singles, widows and widowers, Paul's message was that it was better for them not to marry because of the marital challenges that hinder one's full commitment and service to the Lord as a Believing Christian. Let me note here quickly that Paul was not against God's purpose of procreation as given to Adam and Even in the Garden of Eden; the blessing of command to be fruitful and multiply **(Genesis 1:22, 28)**. Neither was he against the blessing of fruitfulness and multiplication of Noah and his sons **(Genesis 9:1)**. Both Jacob and Esau were blessed to be fruitful and multiply by Isaac **(Genesis 27:27 – 29, 28:39 & 40)**. Besides, God blessed Jacob in this same dimension of his father Isaac **(Genesis 35:11)**. This same blessing was given to Joseph by Jacob before he died **(Genesis 48:3 & 4)**. Indeed Paul's belief in procreation is buttressed by his preaching of Christ to the people of Athens by linking nations of all people to the origination of humanity in the Garden of Eden; the blood of Adam. This is purposed driven to find God and worship Him **(Acts 17:26 & 27)**.

We read

1 Corinthians 7:9 – but if they cannot exercise self-control, let them marry. For it is better to marry than to burn with passion.

On this truth and revelation, Paul wanted the singles, widows and widowers to be like him. How he wished all men were like Jesus and him **(Acts 26:28 & 29)**? But offered and reminded them the blessing of marriage to prevent the commitment of sexual immoralities in the Church. His righteous desire and motive was to see them grow spiritually unto maturity with holiness not a subject of controversy. It means to say that they were to choose marriage over sexual immoralities as stated in details. He was determined to make the Corinthians Believers candidates of heaven and not candidates of hell through holiness in marriage.

PAUL WAS NOT AGAINST PROCREATION AS THE BLESSING OF GOD OVER HUMANITY. RATHER, HE ADVOCATED MARRIAGE FOR SINGLES, WIDOWS AND WIDOWERS AS A CHECK AGAINST COMMITMENT, TRAP AND BONDAGE OF SEXUAL IMMORALITIES.

THE CONFERMENT OF CELIBACY FOR THE SAKE OF THE GOSPEL OF JESUS CHRIST IS FRUITFUL AND REWARDING.

He noted also the sovereignty of God where the Holy Spirit gave different gifts to members of the Church to be fruitful as heaven bound. The word of Jesus that not all people have the measure of grace to marry or practice celibacy unless conferred by God. We read

Matthew 19:11 & 12 – But He said to them, “All cannot accept this saying, but only those to whom it has been given: For there are eunuchs who were born thus from their mother’s womb, and there are eunuchs who were made eunuchs by men, and there are eunuchs who have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven’s sake. He who is able to accept it, let him accept it.”

This saying and teaching by Jesus is not for the immature but the mature who have knowledge, wisdom and understanding in the word of God. Indeed we need the leading and conviction of the Holy Spirit to believe this hard saying. According to the gospel of Jesus, eunuchs belong to one of these three groups.

1. Those from childbirth believed to be divine
2. Those made eunuchs by their fellow men
3. Those who have made themselves eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of God

Is this applicable to our lives as Believing Christians today? It is important to note that both Jesus and Paul share the same belief and confession to ensure holiness in the Church. Therefore the choice of concession or marriage is still before us to make righteous decisions that guarantee eternal life and commitment and faithfulness in service to the Lord. If celibacy is a divine order, then God will give you the grace to be single, holy and make your eternal contributions in ministry righteous to Him. The other options of being a celibate as a personal decision for the kingdom of God is considered better and eternally rewarding than when people force you to become one with no eternal benefits.

On this score, Christians can marry and have sex and children in a righteous manner as if this would serve as a preventive measure to the commitment of sexual immoralities. Self – control is a fruit of the Spirit. However if practicing the law of celibacy would make them burn with passion, then they are to marry and be holy. Like Paul, our bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit and demonstrate the power and glory of God in Christ.

MARRIAGE LIFE IS BETTER THAN BURNING WITH SEXUAL PASSION AND COMMITTING SEXUAL IMMORALITIES. HENCE MAKE MARRIAGE A BEAUTIFUL INSTITUTION AND CHURCH POLICY AS ORDAINED BY GOD AND EMPHASIZED BY JESUS AND PAUL.

PRAYER

Help us O God to accept and focus in the things that would promote affairs of the kingdom of God.

Help all Believing Christians struggling with sexual immoralities to overcome them with righteous interventions like marriages of men and women.

Whether celibacy or widow, widower, marriage, give us the grace not to indulge in sexual immoralities.

Let holiness be our portion so that Your Church would be holy to experience Your power and glory. In Jesus' name. Amen.

ONE THING IS SINFUL IN THE SIGHT OF GOD AND THE CHURCH; SEXUAL IMMORALITIES. TO BE SINGLE, WIDOWED, OR CELIBATE ACCORDING TO THE WILL OF GOD IS A BLESSING AND REWARDING. BUT TO BURN WITH PASSION AND BE INVOLVED IN SEXUAL IMMORALITIES IS TO MARRY ACCORDING TO THE GOSPEL OF PAUL. **NANA KWAKU DUODU**

LIFE OF CELIBACY IN HOLINESS IS BETTER THAN INDULGING IN SEXUAL IMMORALITIES AS A CHRISTIAN AND IN THE CHURCH. IF THIS WAS A CONCESSION FROM PAUL TO THE CORINTHIANS BELIEVERS WHO STRUGGLED WITH SEXUAL IMMORALITIES, THEN THE MARRIAGE OFFER IS A RIGHTEOUS INTERVENTION TO ENSURE HOLINESS IN ALL CHURCHES. **NANA KWAKU DUODU**

MARRIAGE IS A LIFE TIME DECISION; DO NOT DIVORCE

INSPIRATION

The leader must initiate solutions to solve problems and must apply wisdom to maintain the fold even with strong measures in place. The bible says that wisdom is the principal thing and therefore we should grab it with understanding as we seek other virtues in life **(Proverbs 4:7)**.

According to the English dictionary, a concession is something that is allowed or given up, often in order to end a disagreement. A commandment is a divine rule such as the Ten Commandments **(Exodus 20:1 – 17)**. Let's study further.

1 Corinthians 7:10 & 11 – Now to the married I command, yet not I but the Lord: A wife is not to depart from her husband. But even if she does depart, let her remain unmarried or be reconciled to her husband. And a husband is not to divorce his wife.

Apostle Paul's message to the married in the Church of Corinth was that the Lord had commanded his mind and position on marriage for obedience without options and alternatives.

The New King James Bible Commentary provides meaning to the phrase: not I but the Lord – When Christ was earth, He told us not to divorce; instead of a spouse, Paul uses the word translated depart, which refers to wives leaving their husbands. The idea is the same: A believing husband and wife should not leave each other. The further statement that if the couple they were to remain unmarried is consistent with Jesus' teaching **(Mark 10:6 – 9)**.

We read

1 Corinthians 7:10b – A wife is not to depart from her husband.

The Lord's command was that a wife was not to depart from her husband. It means to say that the command of the Lord as emphasized by Paul was a reminder to the intent and purpose of marriage as it was in the beginning with Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden **(Genesis 2:24)**. To depart is to leave especially in order to start a journey. What this means is that to leave your marriage and start a journey of divorce or another marriage is contrary to the God's righteous intent and purpose of marriage.

Indeed marriage is for life with no place for divorce. It is equated to the marriage relationship between Jesus (Husband) and the Church (Bride) which is for life and eternity with no intention and placement for divorce **(Ephesians 5:22 – 33)**.

THE MARRIAGE OF A MAN AND A WOMAN IS FOR LIFE AND SHOULD BE A REFLECTION OF A DEEP AND CLOSE RELATIONSHIP AS BETWEEN JESUS CHRIST AND THE CHURCH.

On this revelation, the Apostle Paul affirmed the message of Jesus on marriage and informed the Corinthian Church that this was not his concept or idea but the Lord Himself. In truth, a believing husband and a believing wife must have the mind of Christ and faithfully build their marriage accordingly in love.

THE MIND OF CHRIST IS THAT MARRIAGE AS BELIEVERS IS BASED ON GOD'S LOVE AND THE ETERNAL LOVE BETWEEN CHRIST AND THE CHURCH TO BE STRONG AND RESULTS ORIENTED.

We read

1 Corinthians 7:11 – But even if she does depart, let her remain unmarried or be reconciled to her husband. And a husband is not to divorce his wife.

On the subject of divorce, the Apostle Paul stated that the woman must remain unmarried to reinforce his position on marriage. The righteous reason is that the Hillel position of divorcing a spouse for any reason is unacceptable to God unlike the Shammai position of sexual immoralities or sexual impurities. For the Holy Spirit is involved in all Christian marriages and detachment and disconnection are possible when the body is abused sexually as non – responsive to convictions, counsels and holiness to God's word. This is a very controversial subject matter which state laws easily contradict because of right to marriage and divorce enforcement for both men and women of age and of sound mind and reason.

For divorce to be granted by the Church, it must have the endorsement of the Holy Spirit with scriptural basis where the body and personality of the husband or wife is engaged in sexual immoralities and therefore the sin of adultery is committed. In this degrading state of the marital relationship, the Holy Spirit disengages Himself from the believer and makes physical divorce possible between a husband and a wife.

DO NOT BE HAPPY TO DIVORCE YOUR SPOUSE EXCEPT FOR THE COMMITMENT OF THE SIN OF ADULTERY. DIVORCE IS NOT THE MIND OF GOD FOR HIS CHILDREN.

To protect the institution and sanctity of marriage by God, the mind of God, Jesus Christ and Holy Spirit are revealed in the following scriptures.

We read

Mark 10:2 – 9 Then the Pharisees came and asked Him “Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife?” testing Him. And He answered and said to them, What did

Moses command you?” They said, “Moses permitted a certificate of divorce, and to dismiss her.” And Jesus answered and said to them, “Because of the hardness of heart, he write this precept. But from the beginning of the creation, God ‘made them male and female.’ ‘For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh’; so then they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate.”

The institution and sanctity of marriage as ordained by God from the beginning of human relationship in the Garden of Eden was Jesus’ answer to the testing question of the Pharisees. Marriage divorce was not in God’s dictionary but Moses’ permission of a divorce was a concession which became a rule in Israel because of the hardness of their hearts. It means to say that the Israelites struggled to obey God’s command in marriage and be holy to Him. Hence the certificate of divorce was to separate them from unfaithfulness through legalities but held them their covenant relationship with God.

By Jesus’ words, the institution of marriage between Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden and even outside the Garden of Eden was emphasized to be the best and close sexual relationship and union like blood relationship. This is where a man leaves the family and is joined to the wife. God’s word does not see them as two flesh but one flesh. Hence God does not permit a man to separate the marriage union of a couple contrary to His word, intent and purpose for companionship, procreation and eternal purpose and blessings.

WHAT GOD HAS PUT TOGETHER, LET NO MAN PUT ASUNDER. DO NOT BE THE CAUSE AND REASON FOR YOUR OWN MARRIAGE DIVORCE OR AS A THIRD PARTY.

Clearly God’s word is against divorce in marriage. We read

Malachi 2:16 – “For the Lord God of Israel says That He hates divorce, For it covers one’s garment with violence,” Says the Lord of hosts. “Therefore take heed to your spirit, That you do not deal treacherously.”

This means that it was difficult to get God’s approval to divorce your spouse under Jewish law because it was tied to their covenantal relationship with Him. For divorce was associated with detachment from covering and association with violence and treachery which was not a reflection of God’s Spirit and nature in man.

It means to say that the only time God permitted divorce in marriage was under the Old Covenant with an issued certificate through Moses. But now the commandment of Jesus Christ stands sure under the New Covenant. We read

Mathew 5:32 – But I say to you that whoever divorces his wife for any reason except sexual immorality causes her to commit adultery; and whoever marries a woman who is divorced commits adultery.

It means to say that no reason or excuse is strong enough to warrant a marriage divorce in the Church. This is permitted only on the condition of sexual immorality. That is the stage when the offender is with non – repented heart after rejecting various convictions and counsels. In this disposition, whoever marries this sinful man or woman for any other reason also shares in the sin of adultery.

A NON – REPENTED ADULTERER CORRUPTS ANY ANOTHER PERSON HE OR SHE MARRIES. NOTE THAT JESUS WAS DEALING WITH THE STATE OF THE HEART BEYOND PHYSICAL AND SEXUAL CONTACTS.

The New King James Bible Commentary states that a certificate of divorce was a document signed before witnesses. Its intent was to limit frivolous divorces. In Jesus' days, the interpretation of this custom varied widely. The disciples of Hillel allowed divorce for almost any reason, but the followers of Shammai permitted divorce only for sexual impurity.

Besides, the protection of the marriage union reveals two options of being unmarried after divorce or opportunity to reconcile with your separated or divorced partner. Like the prodigal son who reconciled with the father (**Luke 15:11 – 32**) and God's reconciliation with the world through Jesus Christ (**John 3:16**), opportunity is given to confess your sins and weaknesses to each other for reconciliation purpose and to experience answered prayers efficiently (**James 5:16**).

MAKE YOUR MARRIAGE WORK BECAUSE YOU HAVE THE HOLY SPIRIT. RECONCILE WITH YOUR SEPARATED OR DIVORCED SPOUSE WITH EVERY POSITIVE OPPORTUNITY.

PRAYER

Dear God, give us the wisdom to protect and preserve the sanctity of marriage as Your Church to experience love, kindness, goodness, procreation blessings and eternal blessings.

Make couples committed to one another in love just as Christ loves the Church and help us with Your Holy Spirit to keep marriages in holiness.

May we be forgiving to keep our marriages alive in the power of the Holy Spirit and let divorce not be in vocabulary and dictionary of marriage.

In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

IF A MAN AND WOMAN MARRIES IN LOVE AND ACCORDING TO GOD'S ORIGINAL CONCEPT OF MARRIAGE AND ACCORDING TO CHRIST'S ETERNAL LOVE AND BLESSINGS FOR THE CHURCH, THEN I CANNOT ENTERTAIN DIVORCE. HAVE THE RIGHTEOUS MIND TO MARRY FOR LIFE AND ENJOY GOD'S BLESSINGS FOR YOU, SPOUSE AND FAMILY AND THE CHURCH. **NANA KWAKU DUODU**

THOUGH DIVORCE RATES ARE HIGH IN OUR DAYS WITH AND WITHOUT COURT SETTLEMENTS, WE STAND BY THE WORDS OF JESUS AND PAUL TO RESPECT THE SANCTITY OF MARRIAGE AND MAKE NO ROOM FOR DIVORCE AS HIS CHURCH. **NANA KWAKU DUODU**

THE PROCESS OF SANCTIFICATION THROUGH A BELIEVING SPOUSE IN MARRIAGE

INSPIRATION

The leader must initiate solutions to solve problems and must apply wisdom to maintain the fold even with strong measures in place. The bible says that wisdom is the principal thing and therefore we should grab it with understanding as we seek other virtues in life **(Proverbs 4:7)**.

According to the English dictionary, a concession is something that is allowed or given up, often in order to end a disagreement. A commandment is a divine rule such as the Ten Commandments **(Exodus 20:1 – 17)**. Let's study further.

1 Corinthians 7:12 – 16 But to the rest I, not the Lord, say: If any brother has a wife who does not believe, and she is willing to live with him, let him not divorce her. And a woman who has a husband who does not believe, if he is willing to live with her, let her not divorce him. For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband; otherwise your children would be unclean, but now they are holy. But if the unbeliever departs, let him depart; a brother or a sister is not under bondage in such cases. But God has called us to peace. For how do you know, O wife, whether you will save your husband? Or how do you know, O husband, whether you will save your wife?

A// WILLINGNESS OF BELIEVING AND UNBELIEVING SPOUSES TO STAY TOGETHER; NO DIVORCE

The Holy Spirit helps Believing Christians to make righteous decisions based on the knowledge and application of God's word. Apostle Paul made another concession to the Church of Corinth concerning marriage and divorce to ensure holiness and avert sexual impurity.

We read

1 Corinthians 7:12a – But to the rest I, not the Lord, say

His message here has no direct bearing to the exact words by Jesus on the marriage between a believing spouse and a non – believing spouse. But he believed in the application of Godly wisdom to solve Church problems as led by the Holy Spirit.

The New King James Bible Commentary provides meaning to the phrase: I, not the Lord, say: Paul presents a problem that was not addressed by Jesus. Sometimes a husband or wife would become a Christian, but the spouse would not. Paul exhorts the believer to remain married if the unbelieving spouse does not want to divorce.

We read

1 Corinthians 7:12b & 13 – If any brother has a wife who does not believe, and she is willing to live with him, let him not divorce her. And a woman who has a husband who does not believe, if he is willing to live with her, let her not divorce him.

Therefore he spoke as an Apostle of the Christian faith to establish Christ righteousness and peace in the marriage between Believing and Unbelieving spouses. By the revelation of the Holy Spirit and wisdom of God, he advocated and instructed that such a marriage should be maintained and encouraged if it is based on love and willingness to stay together.

This was to solve the problem where either the husband or the wife was a Christian and went to Church or not. Truly there were many instances of marriages between believers and unbelievers or both spouses married as unbelievers but one of them became a believer. In their generation, this was a common thing because Christianity was in its early stage with no clear guidelines to solve marital challenges.

DO NOT DIVORCE YOUR UNBELIEVING SPOUSE IF THE MARRIAGE IS BASED ON LOVE AND WILLINGNESS TO BE MARRIAGE PARTNERS EVEN AS A BELIEVER OR AN UNBELIEVER. THEREFORE BAD COUNSEL FROM FRIENDS AND ENEMIES TO DIVORCE YOUR SPOUSES MUST BE REJECTED. HOWEVER BE MINDFUL OF CHALLENGES AND BE READY TO DEAL WITH THEM PEACEFULLY.

B// SANCTIFICATION IN MARRIAGE THROUGH BELIEVING SPOUSE

The Holy Spirit helps Believing Christians to make righteous decisions based on the knowledge and application of God's word. We read

1 Corinthians 7:14 – For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband; otherwise your children would be unclean, but now they are holy.

Apostle Paul reveals further the wisdom and power of God through Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit to change people and situations in marriages. The process of sanctification is the work of the Holy Spirit through the life and ministry of the believing spouse. As a result, the unbelieving spouse is exposed to the teachings of Christ, works and fruit of the Holy Spirit that reveals God's love to him or her. This is true because many unbelieving spouses are now Christians because of the power of the Holy Spirit in their believing spouses.

The same application of sanctification is towards the children of the couple because of God's word to influence and change them. That is to become Christians if the believing

spouse prays, read and explain the bible and goes to Church with them. This is the divine opportunity and God's wisdom in marriage to transform and change an unbelieving spouse and children in the family.

GOD'S POWER AND TEACHINGS OF JESUS CHRIST BY THE HOLY SPIRIT IS AT WORK IN BELIEVING SPOUSES TO CHANGE THEIR UNBELIEVING SPOUSES AND SANCTIFY THEIR CHILDREN.

This same message was shared by Apostle Peter to the Jewish Believers who were scattered in regions of Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia.

We read

1 Peter 3:1 – 6 Wives, likewise, be submissive to your own husbands, that even if some do not obey the word, they, without a word, may be won by the conduct of their wives, when they observe your chaste conduct accompanied by fear. Do not let your adornment be outward—arranging the hair, wearing gold, or putting on apparel—rather the hidden person of the heart, with the incorruptible of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is very precious in the sight of God. For in this manner, in former times, the holy women who trusted in God also adorned themselves, being submissive to their own husbands, as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord, whose daughters you are if you do good and are not afraid with any terror.

Peter's message to the Church was to create peaceful co – existence between believing wives and unbelieving husbands. Wives were to submit to their husbands and win them for Christ. They were to love, care, show affection and support their unbelieving husbands so that their good conduct known to all would be the channel of transformation by God. Specifically, he mentioned Christian qualities of a pure heart and inner beauty to be more powerful and win the hearts of their unbelieving husbands for Christ more than physical adornment of the hair and body. By this gospel truth, he charged them to behave righteously and have the quality of submissiveness like Sarah who called Abraham lord.

It means to say that when believing wives pray and fast for their unbelieving husbands, and conduct themselves well before them, it wins their hearts to experience Christ and eventually respond to the convictions of God's word. We read

1 Peter 3:7 – Husbands, likewise, dwell with understanding, giving honor to the wife, as to the weaker vessel, and as heirs together of the grace of life, that your prayers may not be hindered.

Peter's message of a peaceful marriage home also charged husbands to know the strengths and weaknesses, likes and dislikes of their wives, and work hard to improve their wellbeing. Dwelling with wives in understanding is to give them special attention and care to make them enjoy their marriages. Also important is the recognition of heirs

of Christ together to obtain eternal life and therefore the need to pray and help strengthen one another in the Christian faith. According to the gospel of Peter, failure of husbands to practice these marriage virtues means that their prayers would not be answered.

It means to say that husbands who cheat on their wives (**extra marital affairs**) and makes them cry and go through emotional pain and torture cannot experience answered prayers even if they are Ministers in the Church or Church leaders or Church workers.

This is what I call evangelism in the marriage home where believing spouses win their unbelieving spouses for Christ through love, submissive, care, affection, the word of God, prayers and leading of the Holy Spirit. In other words, the believing spouse is the Pastor in the marriage home.

LOVE, SUBMISSIVENESS AND REVERENCE IN MARRIAGE CHANGE UNBELIEVING SPOUSES. BEARING THE FRUIT OF SELF – CONTROL AND PATIENCE IN PRAYER AND WORKS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT ARE THE NEEDED TRANSFORMATION AND CHANGE TOOLS GOD USES MORE THAN OUTSIDERS. BE THE PASTOR OF YOUR MARRIAGE HOME.

C// PERMITTED DIVORCE BETWEEN BELIEVING AND UNBELIEVING SPOUSES

The Holy Spirit helps Believing Christians to make righteous decisions based on the knowledge and application of God's word. We read

1 Corinthians 7:15 & 16 – But if the unbeliever departs, let him depart; a brother or a sister is not under bondage in such cases. But God has called us to peace. For how do you know, O wife, whether you will save your husband? Or how do you know, O husband, whether you will save your wife?

Apostle Paul reveals an extreme case in marriage when an unbelieving spouse decides to break the marriage union even when the Holy Spirit makes the believing spouse exhibit Christ's love, submissiveness and forgiveness. At this stage, the unbelieving spouse who wants to leave the marriage union would set free the believing spouse in the marriage obligation. It means permitted divorce in this instance without the making of the Believing spouse.

The bible says that God has called us to peace so that marriages would be blessed and not suffer shame and reproach. Therefore be an instrument of peace to make your marriage work as a Believing spouse and change your unbelieving spouse. For God has destined that some unbelieving spouses would be saved by their believing spouses. Though we don't it all, God is All Knowing and believing His word of salvation makes the miracle happen in the name of Jesus.

This is the New King James Bible Commentary: how do you know – The Greek grammar suggests that Paul asked the question expecting a negative answer. The promise given in **1 Peter 3:1 – 6, however, reminds us that consistent obedience to God can make a skeptical spouse into a believing one.**

It means to say that when God permits a marriage union between a believing Christian and an unbeliever, know that He is poised to make His righteous agenda of transformation and change a reality.

DIVORCE IN THIS KIND OF MARRIAGE UNION IS PERMITTED WHEN THE UNBELIEVING SPOUSE BECOMES STUBBORN AND ARROGANT TO LOVE, SUBMISSIVENESS, FORGIVENESS AND COUNSEL. THE UNBELIEVING SPOUSE WHO WANTS TO LEAVE THE MARRIAGE UNION BECAUSE OF YOUR FAITH IN CHRIST WOULD SET FREE THE BELIEVING SPOUSE IN THE MARRIAGE OBLIGATION.

HOWEVER, BELIEVE THE POWER OF THE GOSPEL TO CHANGE SITUATIONS BECAUSE GOD IS DIVINE AND MAN IS HUMAN AND ONE SPOUSE AS A BELIEVING CHRISTIAN.

New King James Bible: Foot Notes: Sanctified means set apart – refers to a special situation where an unbelieving husband or wife enjoys when his or her spouse is a believer, being exposed to God’s teachings. Unclean here probably means the opposite of sanctified. Children with one believing parent may learn about God and come to Christ. If an unbeliever seeks to divorce a believing spouse, the Christian is not under bondage or obligation to continue the marriage.

PRAYER

Thank you O God for the marriage institution and the blessings that are associated with it.

We pray that You will use Believing spouses to transform and change unbelieving spouses in marriage through love, submissiveness, patience and faithfulness.

May Your Holy Spirit use Believing spouses to have a positive influence in the raising up of their children to be sanctified in Christ and the word of God.

May Your Holy Spirit guide the hearts of Believing spouses to be set free from the bondage of unbelieving spouses and marriages if they demand divorce.

We ask for all of these in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

THE CHURCH BELIEVES THAT WHEN A BELIEVING SPOUSE AND AN UNBELIEVING SPOUSE WILLINGLY DECIDE TO LOVE ONE ANOTHER AND

CONTINUE IN THE MARRIAGE, DIVORCE IS OUT OF THE PICTURE. **NANA KWAKU DUODU**

THE PROCESS OF SANCTIFICATION IN MARRIAGE IS THAT IT GIVES OPPORTUNITIES TO UNBELIEVING SPOUSES TO BE MADE RIGHTEOUS FROM THEIR BELIEVING SPOUSES. THE POWER AND INFLUENCE OF BELIEVING SPOUSES IN THE RAISING UP OF THEIR CHILDREN MAKES THEM ACCEPTED ALSO AS GOD'S CHILDREN. THEREFORE FOR EVERY MARRIAGE WITH ONE BELIEVING SPOUSE, THE FUTURE OF THAT MARRIAGE AND FAMILY IS GLORIOUS AND A BLESSING. **NANA KWAKU DUODU**

DIVORCE IS PERMITTED BY THE CHURCH WHEN THE UNBELIEVING SPOUSE DECIDES TO END THE MARRIAGE UNION WITH A BELIEVING SPOUSE. YOU ARE FREE TO MARRY A BELIEVING SPOUSE IF THIS IS THE ONLY WAY TO KEEP YOU AWAY FROM COMMITTING SEXUAL IMMORALITIES. **NANA KWAKU DUODU**

**BE FOCUSED AND FAITHFUL;
OBEY THE COMMANDMENTS OF GOD BEYOND TRADITION**

INSPIRATION

The New Covenant blessing in Christ is highlighted by Paul to be greater than the Old Covenant blessing of the Law. For when we believe and walk in this truth and revelation, our Christian lives and works would be in the power of the Holy Spirit. This is an addendum to Paul's earlier message of having interest in the benefits of the cross of Christ among the Corinthians Believers **(1 Corinthians 2:2)**. Let's study further.

1 Corinthians 7:17 – 19 But as God has distributed to each one, as the Lord has called each one, so let him walk. And so I ordain in all the churches. Was anyone called while circumcised? Let him not become uncircumcised. Was anyone called while uncircumcised? Let him not be circumcised. Circumcision is nothing and uncircumcision is nothing, but keeping the commandments of God is what matters.

Specifically we read

1 Corinthians 7:17 – But as God has distributed to each one, as the Lord has called each one, so let him walk. And so I ordain in all the churches.

Paul began a new phase of his message to the Church of Corinth to be mindful of their calling and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. In other words, they were not to be entangled in traditional and cultural practices of the Law that would limit their Christian faith. Hence as God has called and given grace to each one of them, they were to live and walk in like manner. He revealed also that this was his drive and passion for all the Churches to live by their faith in Christ as the New Covenant blessing for our eternal salvation.

This is the New King James Bible Commentary: so let him walk – This section develops the theme of faithfulness to the Christian calling rather than to social status. Whether you are slave or free—upper class or lower, powerful or powerless, married or single—is irrelevant, what matters is your calling from God (1 Corinthians 3:11).

THE APOSTOLIC AUTHORITY OF PAUL WAS REVEALED IN HIS COMMAND TO THE CHURCH OF CORINTH AND OTHER CHURCHES TO BE MINDFUL OF THEIR CALLING AND IDENTITY BEYOND SOCIETAL IDENTITY, DESCRIPTION AND PERCEPTION.

We read

1 Corinthians 7:18 – Was anyone called while circumcised? Let him not become uncircumcised. Was anyone called while uncircumcised? Let him not be circumcised.

In Paul's message, he commanded the Corinthian Believers to live as they have been called and not be subjected to the whims and caprices of the Law, traditions and cultures that contradict their faith and freedom in the Lord Jesus Christ. Whether called as circumcised or not, is not of importance to God but faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. For if this is not of concern to God as Believing Christians, then there is no need to argue over circumcision or not to be righteous and acceptable to God. In other words, he commanded all the Churches not to accept or deny the right of any Believing Christian into their fellowship on the basis of circumcision by law or not.

We read

1 Corinthians 7:19 – Circumcision is nothing and uncircumcision is nothing, but keeping the commandments of God is what matters.

By this bold statement, circumcision and uncircumcision are nothing before God because it has to do with removal of the foreskin of the penis or not. Though it was part of the Abrahamic covenant with God, it does not remove sin from your heart and life of self – righteousness. Truly, it does not make you righteous before God. Rather the New Covenant of faith in Christ is what matters to God and makes us righteous to Him. Hence obeying the commandments of God in Christ by the Holy Spirit is what matters to God and not the segregations and pride of life, and societal status and acceptance or societal status and rejection.

It means to say that Paul encouraged the Churches to be obedient to the heavenly calling in whatever capacity and level in life because the Holy Spirit is freely given to all Believing Christians.

Know that the matter of circumcision was a Jewish command that dates back to the era of the Patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (**Genesis 17:10 – 14**). It was also a strict Jewish practice that distinguished Israel from other nations and determined their obedience and religious obligations to God. It was so religiously practiced and even preferred to Jesus' teachings and works on the Sabbath by the religious leaders and religious sects of the Pharisees, Sadducees, Scribes and Zealots. To the Israelites, it marked the first physical sign of righteousness to God and a member of the commonwealth of Israel (**John 7:22 & 23**).

This religious challenge translated also to the generation of Apostle Paul and reared its head in the Corinthian Church. It made their Christian faith and unity feeble and not strong. Apostle Paul had to correct this false doctrine that only circumcised Christians

were righteous to God. Beyond circumcision or not is the need to obey the commandments of God. To obey God is to accept and obey His offer of eternal salvation in His Son Jesus Christ **(John 3:16)**.

Solomon in all his knowledge and wisdom concluded that the whole duty of man is to fear God and obey His commandments **(Ecclesiastics 12:13)**. For God shall judge all our works whether good or evil and even every secret work **(Ecclesiastics 12:14)**.

The message is that Christians should look beyond physical conditions like circumcision by law and embrace totally Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord. For circumcision is inwardly, of the heart and in the Spirit, and not of the letter and the flesh with praise not from men but God **(Romans 2:29)**. This explains why Apostle Paul reveals in **verse 17** the superiority of God in Christ through His offer of the Holy Spirit to both believing circumcised and non – circumcised Christians in the Church.

We read

Acts 15:8 & 9 – So God, who knows the heart, acknowledged them by giving them the Holy Spirit, just as He did to us, and made no distinction between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith.

Apostle Peter's same message to the gathering of the Apostles and Elders in Jerusalem was to correct the false doctrine about circumcision from certain men from Judea. The emphasis and qualification is the offer of Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit to all believers without partiality or class distinction like the Upper class and Lower class people by birth in Israel and other nations. We know also of the class system in India which considers some people and ethnic groups of higher value than others. For this Peter confessed that God made no distinction between the Believing Jews and Gentile believers purifying their hearts in faith and not the circumcision of the Law.

SOUND CHRISTIAN DOCTRINES DO NOT LAY EMPHASIS ON CIRCUMCISION OF THE FORESKIN OF THE PENIS AS BEING RIGHTEOUS AND ACCEPTABLE TO GOD. THIS IS A MYOPIC UNDERSTANDING OF THE POWER AND SALVATION OF GOD IN CHRIST. RATHER THOSE WHO BELIEVE IN CHRIST AND PRACTICE THE COMMANDMENTS OF GOD MATTERS TO GOD.

BESIDES WOMEN WERE NOT CIRCUMCISED IN ISRAEL BUT ARE EQUALLY ACCEPTED BY GOD WHEN THEY BELIEVE IN CHRIST AND GIVEN THE HOLY SPIRIT LIKE THEIR MALE COUNTERPARTS.

As the Lord has called, so walk in Him. It is clear in this message that only our sinful conditions and works must change but our state like physical conditions of circumcision or not before becoming Christians can be maintained and still be righteous. It was meant to promote and maintain the truth that eternal salvation can only be achieved in one's belief in Jesus Christ and not the practice of religious obligations.

The same message by Apostle Paul to the Church in Galatia confirms his authority and order to all the Churches; not just the Corinthian Church.

We read

Galatians 6:15 – For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but a new creation.

By this message, Paul emphasized that circumcision of the foreskin of the penis is by Law for the Israelites whereas uncircumcision is noted among the Gentiles because it is not their law. The good news is that when one comes to Christ whether as a circumcised Israelite or uncircumcised Gentile, he or she is a new creation. The Holy Spirit is given to live the life of faith and righteousness predestined to the image of Christ. For by faith and righteousness in Christ, we are justified as children of God.

CHRISTIANITY IS NOT ABOUT BOAST IN THE FLESH BUT THE LIFE OF A NEW CREATION IN CHRIST BY THE HOLY SPIRIT.

HOWEVER, IF YOU DECIDE TO CIRCUMCISE FOR HEALTH AND HYGIENIC REASONS, SO BE IT BUT NEVER USE IT AS A MARK OF ETERNAL SALVATION AND LIFE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS IN CHRIST.

Faithfulness and joy are keys that would make the power, gifts, works and fruit of the Holy Spirit evident in our lives and ministries to produce good results.

THE HOLY SPIRIT IS GIVEN TO BELIEVERS FOR RESULTS ORIENTED CHRISTIAN LIVING AND NOT ON THE BASIS OF CIRCUMCISION.

PRAYER

Help us O God to accept and encourage one another through Church and Christian leaderships to promote same faith in Christ and all Churches.

With Your Holy Spirit, make us mindful of having righteous hearts by faith and obedience to the complete gospel of Jesus Christ, and not circumcision by law.

Help us to discern righteously as a Church that it is not about boasts in the Law of the Israelites and boasts in the religious beliefs of the Gentiles but obedience in Christ to God that guarantees our eternal salvation.

We ask for all these things in the name of Jesus. Amen.

SOUND CHRISTIAN DOCTRINES IN ALL CHURCHES COMMAND US TO PUT OUR FAITH IN CHRIST AND OBEY THE COMMANDMENTS OF GOD ALWAYS. FALSE DOCTRINES OUTSIDE THE CHURCH MAKE CIRCUMCISION OF THE LAW OR

PROLIFERATION OF OTHER RELIGIOUS PRACTICES ANOTHER WAY OF GOD'S RIGHTEOUSNESS. **NANA KWAKU DUODU**

THE FREEDOM EVERY BELIEVING CHRISTIAN HAS IN CHRIST IS NOT BY RESTRICTION OF THE LAW BUT JOY IN COMPLETE OBEDIENCE TO CHRIST AND HIS GOSPEL OF SALVATION. FOR OBEDIENCE TO THE GOSPEL OF JESUS CHRIST IS PREFERRED TO BOASTS IN THE LAW. **NANA KWAKU DUODU**

REMAIN IN YOUR TRUE CALLING TO FULFILL GOD'S PURPOSES IN CHRIST

INSPIRATION

The New Covenant blessing in Christ is highlighted by Paul to be greater than the Old Covenant blessing of the Law. For when we believe and walk in this truth and revelation, our Christian lives and works would be in the power of the Holy Spirit. This is an addendum to Paul's earlier message of having interest in the benefits of the cross of Christ among the Corinthians Believers **(1 Corinthians 2:2)**. Let's study further.

1 Corinthians 7:20 – 24 Let each one remain in the same calling in which he was called. Were you called while a slave? Do not be concerned about it; but if you can be made free, rather use it. For he who is called in the Lord while a slave is the Lord's freedman. Likewise he who is called while free is Christ's slave. You were bought at a price; do not become slaves of men. Brethren, let each one remain with God in that state in which he was called.

Apostle Paul's commanding message to the Corinthians Believers was to remain in their true state when they were called. By this revelation, he encouraged the Believers to accept their new status as superior to any societal status because their approval and commendation was of the Lord.

We read

1 Corinthians 7:20 – Let each one remain in the same calling in which he was called.

Again, the Apostle Paul placed emphasis on the need to remain in the same state when one became a Christian having instructed the Corinthians Believers just as Believers in other Churches. For it is all about obedience and submissiveness in Christ as a new creation irrespective of status in life.

Earlier, he indicated that the Holy Spirit in believers is the measurement of God's acceptance as His children. To believe in Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord invites the Holy Spirit into your life as a child of God to live the life of Christ and not a life of self – righteousness and sin. By this truth, Paul meant that societal description and perception and rank does not make you special and important to God but faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and service in His vineyard.

RECOGNITION AND ACCEPTANCE OF YOUR IDENTITY IN LIFE CAN BE THE STEPPING STONE TO A LIFE OF FULFILLMENT IN CHRIST. FOR YOU HAVE CLOSED THE DOOR OF DISTRACTION AND OPENED THE DOOR OF FAITH AND WORKS IN SERVICE TO THE LORD.

We read

1 Corinthians 7:21 – Were you called while a slave? Do not be concerned about it; but if you can be made free, rather use it.

Paul's message on maintaining your societal identity and status as a slave even as a Believing Christian should not be a worry at all. It means to say that people can call you names of dishonour but this cannot erase the work of Jesus on the cross for you or change your new Christian identity and status.

Why worry about being a Christian and attaining eternal salvation when God accepts you as you are without partiality and discrimination on the basis of sex, colour, country, ethnicity, tribe, background, education, profession, stature and even physical disabilities. When Paul wrote this message, there was acts of rebellion and insubordination of slaves against their masters in the Christian society.

Freedom in Christ was misconstrued as freedom of slaves from masters and respect and honour was at its lowest level. But Paul stated that the opportunity to be made free in Christ should be embraced fully. For the gospel of Jesus Christ breaks the power of slavery through conviction unto repentance and respect for human dignity as a fellow human being and not an animal. In truth Paul realized that one could worship God and attain a higher spiritual growth and maturity as a freed person than in a slavery status.

DESPITE SOCIETAL DEFINITION OF YOUR LIFE AS A SLAVE OR FROM A LOW CLASS FAMILY OR ETHNIC GROUP OR BACKGROUND, THE GOSPEL OF JESUS CHRIST CHANGES OUR CONSCIENCE AND MAKES OUR MINDSET TO ACCEPT FREEDOM IN CHRIST FOR EASIER SERVICE, SPIRITUAL GROWTH AND MATURITY.

We read

1 Corinthians 7:22a – For he who is called in the Lord while a slave is the Lord's freedman.

Two paradoxical scenarios of a slave and a freed person becoming a Christian was also described by Paul as symbolic of one's state in society. If you became one as a slave, continue to serve your master in respect, humility and diligence. However, you should take advantage of being a free person if freedom is granted. On the other hand, if you became a Christian in a free state, it is good because you can worship God well without master servant restrictions.

For Apostle Paul, the revelation is that the slave with many restrictions, who becomes a Christian, is the Lord's freedman in terms of belief, thoughts and works. You have the nature and mind of Christ for righteous works by the Holy Spirit and no longer the mind

of the devil and the flesh for sinful works. You are no longer in bondage of sin but opportunity to grow in the wisdom and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

IF YOU BECAME A BELIEVING CHRISTIAN AS A SLAVE, SEE YOURSELF AS THE LORD'S FREED PERSON TO GROW IN THE WISDOM AND KNOWLEDGE OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST BECAUSE THE HOLY SPIRIT IS IN YOU.

We read

1 Corinthians 7:22b – Likewise he who is called while free is Christ's slave.

The second revelation by Paul was that if you became a Christian as a freed person, you are Christ's slave to obey and submit to Him at all times. Your sense of belonging is Christ and absolute faith in Him is non – negotiable. It means to say that freedom is not to be used to live carelessly but worship God righteously.

BECOMING A BELIEVING CHRISTIAN IN FREEDOM IS TO HAVE THE MIND OF CHRIST TO TOTAL OBEDIENCE AND SUBMISSIVENESS AND LOYALTY. KNOW THAT FREEDOM IN THE WORLD DOES NOT MEAN FREEDOM FROM CHRIST BUT A SLAVE OF HIM IN ABSOLUTE OBEDIENCE.

We read

1 Corinthians 7:23 – You were bought at a price; do not become slaves of men.

Paul gave the reason why the Corinthians Believers were either the Lord's freedman or slave in all respects. This was because in sin and condemned to death, Jesus bought them at the price of the cross to save them eternally.

As a new creation, our bodies should be used to glorify God irrespective of state whether as a freed person or slave. Therefore reject all attempts to make you slaves of men who manipulate you and restrict your righteous works in Christ by the Holy Spirit. For God recognizes and acknowledges your new identity and status in Christ as a Believing Christian.

GOD OWNS US IN CHRIST AND THEREFORE WE SHOULD HONOUR HIM WITH OUR BODIES AND LIVES TO REFLECT OUR TRUE FREEDOM.

We read

1 Corinthians 7:24 – Brethren, let each one remain with God in that state in which he was called.

With these revelations, Paul admonishes the Churches and all Believing Christians to obey and submit fully to the will of God in Christ by the Holy Spirit irrespective of one's

status in life as a free person or slave working for a master or mistress. For God's acceptance of you is on the basis of your faith in Christ and not societal perception. Know that your Christian services and works are eternally rewarding more than societal perception of you. Do not anxious to rush into doing anything not in God's will. Be satisfied with your new identity as a Believing Christian filled and led by the Holy Spirit in any capacity in life.

We read

Romans 6:13 & 14 – And do not present your members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin, but present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God. For sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law but under grace.

WHEN YOU LIVE THE CHRISTIAN LIFE UNDER GRACE, YOU HAVE POWER OVER SIN AND THE MEMBERS OF YOUR BODY ARE USED TO HONOUR AND GLORIFY GOD. FOR THE GRAVE OF SIN HAS NO DOMINION OVER YOUR LIFE OF GRACE. YOU ARE NO LONGER UNDER THE LAW BUT IN CHRIST.

We read

Romans 6:18 – And having been set free from sin, you became slaves of righteousness.

FREEDOM FROM SIN MEANS FREEDOM IN CHRIST AND REQUIRES TOTAL OBEDIENCE AND SUBMISSIVENESS IN RIGHTEOUSNESS.

We read

2 Corinthians 5:15 – and He died for all, that those who live should live no longer for themselves, but for Him who died for them and rose again.

Later in Paul's second epistle to the Corinthians, he stated clearly that Christ's death delivered us from sin to righteousness. Besides, we have received the Holy Spirit to live for Christ and no longer our old life of sin, evil and wickedness. It means to say also that we cannot be subjected to the whims and caprices of people who manipulate us to sin. Say no to sin.

HAVING THE MIND OF CHRIST HELPS US TO LIVE FOR HIM AND NOT OURSELVES OR OTHER PEOPLE.

Sin is the enemy of righteousness and the Holy Spirit is in us to live right by the standard of Jesus Christ as the fulfillment of God's law. Therefore we can say like Apostle Paul in

Galatians 2:20 – I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.

WHEN YOU OBEY AND SUBMIT FULLY TO THE WILL OF GOD IN CHRIST, YOU CAN ALSO TESTIFY LIKE APOSTLE PAUL TO HAVE SURRENDERED FULLY TO CHRIST AS A BELIEVING CHRISTIAN FILLED AND LED BY THE HOLY SPIRIT.

Paul's teaching should mean a lot to us because we can worship and serve God in any good capacity and position in life as a Church of Believing Christians. We can serve God as free people but slaves in righteousness. Likewise, we can serve God as slaves or like slaves to masters and mistresses in given jobs and given situations but free in Christ. It means to say that the grace of God is enough for all Believing Christians for knowledge acquisition, wisdom, spiritual growth and maturity in the Christian faith.

PRAYER

Dear God, we pray for grace to surrender fully to You in Christ where obedience and submissiveness are associated with us irrespective of our status in society.

Help us with Your Holy Spirit to abide fully in Christ and remain in our true calling. In Jesus' name. Amen.

YOUR TRUE CALLING IS THE TOTAL OBEDIENCE AND SUBMISSIVENESS TO GOD IN CHRIST BY THE HOLY SPIRIT WITH SOCIETAL STATUS. MAKE YOUR CHRISTIAN CONTRIBUTION. NANA KWAKU DUODU

GOD'S GRACE IN CHRIST MAKES OUR CALLING PROFITABLE IN SERVICE, SPIRITUAL GROWTH AND MATURITY WHETHER AS FREE PEOPLE OR SLAVES, OR SOCIETAL DESCRIPTION AND PERCEPTION OF US. WHATEVER, OUR SENSE OF BELONGING IS CHRIST AS FREE PEOPLE AND SLAVES AND WE MUST BE SLAVES OF RIGHTEOUSNESS AND NOT SLAVES TO MEN IN SIN. NANA KWAKU DUODU

THE GOOD NEWS IS THAT YOU CAN WORSHIP AND SERVE GOD IN ANY GOOD POSITION AND CAPACITY IN LIFE, MINISTRY AND THE CHURCH. THEREFORE PROTECT YOUR CALLING THROUGH LIVING BY FAITH IN CHRIST AND LEADING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT WHETHER AS A FREE PERSON OR SLAVE OR SUPERIOR OR SUBORDINATE. NANA KWAKU DUODU

MAKE RIGTHEOUS DECISIONS BY THE HOLY SPIRIT; OVERCOME THE NEGATIVE PRESSURES

INSPIRATION

The bible says that good counsels are a reflection of the thoughts of the righteous unlike the deceitfulness of the wicked (**Proverbs 12:5**). Again the bible says that counsel in the heart of man is like deep water but a man of understanding will draw it out (**Proverbs 20:5**). Hence Paul's righteous counsels to the Church of Corinth and other Churches was based on understanding of their strengths and weaknesses. Let's study further.

1 Corinthians 7:25 – 28 Now concerning virgins: I have no commandment from the Lord; yet I give judgment as one whom the Lord in His mercy has made trustworthy. I suppose therefore that this is good because of the present distress— that it is good for a man to remain as he is: Are you bound to a wife? Do not seek to be loosed. Are you loosed from a wife? Do not seek a wife. But even if you do marry, you have not sinned; and if a virgin marries, she has not sinned. Nevertheless such will have trouble in the flesh, but I would spare you.

This is the New King James Bible Commentary: I have no commandment from the Lord – Paul clearly distinguishes his words as an apostle from the words of Christ.

The title of Apostle conferred on Paul the preacher man was not human but divine because it fulfilled scripture in **Ephesians 4:11 – 16**. He proved his ministry in the power of the Holy Spirit to equip the saints, edified and encouraged the Body of Christ to the attainment of maturity and eternal life. It confirms his first salutation message to the Corinthian Church in chapter one and verse one of his call to be an Apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God and not by human decision.

IF THE ONE PASTORING AND SHEPHERDING YOU IS CALLED AND ANOINTED BY GOD IN CHRIST AND THE HOLY SPIRIT, THEN THE FUTURE OF THE CHURCH IS BRIGHT, BLESSING AND REWARDING. IF NOT THEN THE FUTURE IS BLEAK AND THERE WOULD BE NO VISION BUT BLURRED VISION.

We see this in his spiritual decision on the state of virgins in the Church. His life of honesty and humility won him also a trustworthy person in the Church. He admitted that the Lord Jesus Christ had not spoken and instructed him specifically about virgins unlike other matters. However, a righteous decision had to be made as a spiritually matured person with the Holy Spirit and entrusted apostleship of Jesus Christ (**1 Corinthians 7:25**).

New King James Bible Commentary: A virgin would have lesser family responsibilities and would not be deterred by the possibility of repercussions affecting her husband or children.

EVERY CHURCH LEADER MUST MAKE RIGHTEOUS DECISIONS BY THE HOLY SPIRIT EVEN WHEN GOD IS SILENT ON CRITICAL CHURCH MATTERS. PRAYERS AND FAITH IN THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD ARE NECESSITIES AND THE CHURCH NEEDS YOUR DIVINE WISDOM AND COUNSEL AS THEIR LEADER OR SHEPHERD.

Paul stated clearly that it was necessary to make this righteous decision because of their present distress of persecution and hard times from the world of unbelief and hatred **(1 Corinthians 7:26)**. The state of the Church needed urgent direction and Paul's instructions was timely and acceptable to bring about the divine results. Hence he had to put stringent measures in place to correct this practice. Yeah Paul was a problem solver and his correctional policies worked effectively to make the Church of Corinth a holy place.

His message was the same for all manner of groups and situations in the Church. Remain in the state of your calling because you have the Holy Spirit for a fruitful Christian life. To the virgins, they can marry if they don't have the grace to be celibates but should not make it a stumbling block to the Christian faith, growth and maturity, and attainment of eternal life. This explains why they must not marry if it will be at the expense of their eternal salvation.

MARRY SOMEBODY (CHRISTIAN) WHO WILL HELP YOU IN YOUR CHRISTIAN LIFE TO ATTAIN ETERNAL LIFE. DO NOT MARRY SOMEBODY WHO WILL HELP YOU TO GO TO HELL. IF YOU MARRY AND THIS PREVENTS YOU FROM GOING TO CHURCH, PRAY, STUDY GOD'S WORD, EVANGELIZE AND ACTIVE ROLES IN CHURCH ACTIVITIES, IT WOULD HAVE BEEN BETTER NOT TO HAVE MARRIED.

Further words of counsel by the Holy Spirit showed that married men and women are to remain in their marriage and believe God for fruitful marital relationships and Christian spouses. Married men bound to their wives must not divorce; likewise married women bound to their husbands must not divorce **(1 Corinthians 7:27a)**. They were to endure and overcome challenges and solve problems in their marriages by the help of the Holy Spirit.

DO NOT RUN AWAY FROM YOUR MARITAL RESPONSIBILITIES AND ABANDON YOUR MARRIAGE FOR THE CHURCH BECAUSE OF CHRISTIAN FAITH AND MINISTRY. RATHER REMAIN AS CHRIST'S AMBASSADOR AND LET HIM USE YOU TO CONVICT AND CHANGE YOUR SPOUSE AND FAMILY, AND MAKE YOUR CHURCH ALIVE WITH YOU FAITH IN CHRIST AND WORKS BY THE HOLY SPIRIT.

At another level of counsel, separated and divorced spouses should spare themselves of marriage challenges, sometimes manipulated by the devil, and be single, holy and righteous for Jesus by being loosed from them (**1 Corinthians 7:27b**). In his days, Paul saw how family responsibilities and restrictions prevented full commitment to Church work, spiritual growth, maturity and unity of the brethren. He saw spousal abuses in marriages especially the men's neglect of the nucleus family for self – gratification areas. How it affected the meeting of the brethren as enjoined by the bible, and the devil's manipulations? In Paul's gospel, spouses who were loosed from these restrictions through separation and divorce must not seek to be in this bondage again for the sake of the kingdom of God.

IF YOU ARE TO REMARRY SOMEBODY AND THIS WOULD SET YOU ON THE BROAD ROAD TO HELL, THEN DO NOT MARRY AS A DIVORCED PERSON. KNOW THAT MARRIAGE IS NOT THE REQUIREMENT TO ATTAIN ETERNAL LIFE BUT IT CAN MAKE OR UNMAKE YOU. PAUL'S PICTURE OF IT IS BEING SPARED FROM THE INEVITABLE TROUBLES OF MARRIAGE THAT AFFECT THE CHURCH.

To affirm his position on marriage as a solution to commitment of sexual immoralities, Paul stated that single or divorced women can marry and have family to care as well as the Church. For this is not a sin but an ordinance of God for companionship, affection and procreation from the very beginning. To affirm his consent to marriage as the ordinance of God from the beginning, Paul again stated that virgins can marry but must be guided with knowledge and wisdom to satisfy the home and the Church accordingly (**1 Corinthians 7:28**).

New King James Bible Commentary: Paul does not want to be understood as prohibiting marriage altogether.

PAUL WAS NOT AGAINST THE INSTITUTION OF MARRIAGE FOR SINGLES, DIVORCED AND VIRGINS BECAUSE IT IS GOD ORDAINED FOR COMPANIONSHIP, AFFECTION AND PROCREATION. FOR IN THE PEACE OF IT, THE CHURCH IS ALSO BLESSED TO COMMITTED AND FAITHFUL PEOPLE IN THE LORD'S WORK.

Apostle Paul's desire was to spare the Church of the many and increasing marital challenges and problems. As a Church, his advice to the Christians was for them to make wise decisions by the Holy Spirit and not to make worldly, foolish and regrettable decisions that has eternal consequences. The good news is that Apostle Paul passed the test of trustworthiness and proved to God and Jesus Christ and the Church that he could be entrusted with the souls of people and eternal things by the Holy Spirit.

EVERY CHURCH LEADER MUST BE TRUSTWORTHY TO PROVIDE VISION AND DIRECTION, AND HOPE IN WISDOM BY THE HOLY SPIRIT. THEY MUST HAVE THE GRACE TO COMBINE LEAD THE CHURCH TO NUMERICAL AND SPIRITUAL

GROWTH AND MATURITY, SOLVE ALL MARRIAGE PROBLEMS THAT ARE AFFECTED BY THE HATRED AND PERSECUTIONS FROM THIS WORLD.

Therefore let us be taught and guided by the word of God to number our days so that we will gain a heart of wisdom **(Psalms 90:12)**. Yes be wise through the gospel of Jesus Christ. Build on the Rock as your solid foundation, and not the sand **(Matthew 7:24 – 27)**.

PRAYER

Guide us with Your counsels and wisdom to make righteous decisions all the time that will secure our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and placement in heaven.

Being married or single or virgin, help us with Your Holy Spirit to justify our Christian faith by making righteous decisions and avert careless and foolish decisions in life.

And may we value our eternal salvation more than the temporary pleasures of this life. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

DON'T RUSH TO DIVORCE YOUR SPOUSE OR ENTER INTO MARRIAGE AS A BELIEVING CHRISTIAN WHEN YOU HAVE NOT CONSIDERED THE ETERNAL IMPACT IN YOUR LIFE AND THE CHURCH. WHEN THE HEAT OF THE WORLD COMES AGAINST YOU, WILL YOUR FAITH IN CHRIST ENDURE? BE GUIDED BY THE WISDOM OF GOD AND LEADING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT. NANA KWAKU DUODU

KNOW THAT THE EVIL PRESSURES FROM THE WORLD AGAINST THE CHURCH AND MARRIAGES WILL NEVER END UNTIL JESUS RETURNS AND TAKES US AWAY FOREVER. HOWEVER CHURCH LEADERS ARE TO GUIDE THE MEMBERS WITH WISDOM TO MARRY OR NOT AND STILL MAKE THEIR ETERNAL CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN THROUGH THE CHURCH. NANA KWAKU DUODU

IF WE HAVE REVELATION THAT LIFE ON EARTH IS SHORT IN COMPARISON WITH ETERNITY, WE WILL NOT ALLOW THE CARES AND PRESSURES OF THIS WORLD TO DENY US AS SINGLES, VIRGINS, MARRIED AND DIVORCED PEOPLE, OF OUR GLORIOUS LIFE WITH OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST FOREVER. NANA KWAKU DUODU

THE URGENCY OF THE TIMES AND SEASONS: TOUGH DECISIONS TO MAKE YOU HEAVEN FOCUSED

INSPIRATION

The bible says that good counsels are a reflection of the thoughts of the righteous unlike the deceitfulness of the wicked (**Proverbs 12:5**). Again the bible says that counsel in the heart of man is like deep water but a man of understanding will draw it out (**Proverbs 20:5**). Hence Paul's righteous counsels to the Church of Corinth and other Churches was based on understanding of their strengths and weaknesses. Let's study further.

1 Corinthians 7:29 – 31 But this I say, brethren, the time is short, so that from now on even those who have wives should be as though they had none, those who weep as though they did not weep, those who rejoice as though they did not rejoice, those who buy as though they did not possess, and those who use this world as not misusing it. For the form of this world is passing away.

New King James Bible Commentary: as though they had none – To get married is not sin, but even married couples should dedicate themselves to God's work.

Apostle Paul had to justify the need for holy and righteous living and works in the Church to serve as a check against satanic influences and sexual immoralities. Tough decisions made by Apostle Paul with regards to virgins, married people, and divorced revealed divine emphasis in the life of the Christian and the Church of Corinth.

JESUS CHRIST IS THE FOCUS AND ATTAINMENT OF ETERNAL LIFE, AND IS MORE IMPORTANT THAN PERSONAL ISSUES AND SELF – GRATIFICATION.

"The time is short" reveals the state of divine emergency where God has set His salvation plan in motion and would culminate in the rupture and second coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. It reveals the kairos and chronos dispensations in the affairs of the Church and the world. His message was to prepare them to have the mind of Christ and escape the mind of the world. This was better than being engaged in worldly, satanic and sexual immoralities that would make them lose eternal salvation.

PRIORITIZATION BY THE HOLY SPIRIT IS HAVING THE MIND OF CHRIST TO KNOW THE TIMES AND SEASONS OF GOD, AND ESCAPE THE CORRUPTION OF THIS WORLD.

Paul's message revealed the urgency of the times and the need to keep and protect our Christian faith from the troubles of this world. Marriage was identified as one of the troubling areas to our faith in Christ and Church commitment. Hence the message: **But this I say, brethren, the time is short, so that from now on even those who have wives should be as though they had none (1 Corinthians 7:29)**. What Paul meant

was that couples should not be glued to themselves and restrict the work of God. They were to live as couples but not at the expense of the Church and Kingdom of God. By this message, Paul made the Church of Corinth aware that one could lose eternal salvation just because of a wrong marriage partner. Or one could be ineffective in making eternal contributions through the Church just because of marital problems. Therefore gaining a heart of wisdom to number their days, months and years on earth was good planning and preparation to pass the test of gaining eternal life **(Psalms 90:12)**.

The second point made by Paul was that the troubles of this world because of the Christian faith makes them weep but it is not an excuse to be not committed and faithful in the Lord's work: **But this I say, brethren, the time is short ... those who weep as though they did not weep (1 Corinthians 7:30a)**. By this message Paul made the Church of Corinth aware that they were to overcome their complaints, laments and weep no more because they would soon be comforted at the second coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore gaining a heart of wisdom to number their days, months and years on earth was good planning and preparation to pass the test of gaining eternal life **(Psalms 90:12)**.

Indeed Jesus spoke the truth in the beatitudes (blessings) when He said: **Blessed are those who mourn, For they shall be comforted (Matthew 5:4)**. Again Jesus spoke saying: Blessed are you who weep now For you shall laugh **(Luke 6:21)**. Therefore there is the need for Believing Christians to be focused on their eternal salvation and eternal contributions through the Church.

The third point made by Paul was that being rich and powerful and enjoying the goods of this world is temporary with a big price to pay at the expense of eternal salvation and Church work and eternal contributions: **But this I say, brethren, the time is short ... those who rejoice as though they did not rejoice (1 Corinthians 7:30b)**. By this message, Paul warned the Corinthians Believers against compromising the Christian faith to be in bed with the world. Indeed, the world cannot persecute you and be rejoicing all the time as if all is well. On the other hand, I wish to state that even if all is well and you are rejoicing, be guided by wisdom **(Psalms 90:12)** to live righteously through continuous faith in Christ with eternal works through the Church in preparation for eternity.

The fourth point made by Paul was that business and workers should not be satisfied with their daily chores; salaries, allowances, profits, promotions, positions, and companies at the expense of their eternal salvation and eternal contributions through the Church: **But this I say, brethren, the time is short ... those who buy as though they did not possess (1 Corinthians 7:30c)**. By this message, Paul cautioned the Corinthians Believers not to be overwhelmed with worldly success and profit making and money but hold tight to their Christian faith. They were to work hard and take good care of their homes and families but not at the expense of their faith in Christ and eternal contributions through the Church.

It is also a reminder of the revelation of Jesus that buying and selling cannot take the place of prayer and glory of God in the Church (**Matthew 21:13 & 14, Mark 11:17, Luke 19:45 & 46**). It is also a reminder of the words of Jesus that our hearts should seek to work hard for eternal treasures in heaven where moth and rust cannot touch and destroy them. Not for worldly things that thieves can steal, and rust and insects can easily destroy (**Matthew 6:19 – 21**).

The fifth point made by Paul was that who use their intelligence, wisdom and smartness and power, position, influence and money to get whatever they want in life were warned about the end times as well as their demise on earth. Indeed the time was short with Jesus' second coming but they forgot that they would not live on this earth forever. Hence the warning to this category of Believers in the Church of Corinth: **But this I say, brethren, the time is short ... and those who use this world as not misusing it. For the form of this world is passing away (1 Corinthians 7:31)**.

It affirms the truth that eternal salvation requires a free and Christ minded person filled with the Holy Spirit and not the spirit of the world to attain it. Indeed the world and its pleasures that fight against Christ – centredness and the works and fruit of the Holy Spirit would fade away. The worldly things people pride themselves would be destroyed by the second coming of Christ alongside the devil and his demons and all sinners. However the heavenly Kingdom of God and His Son Jesus Christ is eternal and rewarding. Hallelujah!

MAKING THE WISE DECISION TO FOCUS ON CHRIST AND NOT WORLDLY THINGS AND PLEASURES IS THE BEST ESCAPE FROM SATAN'S PLANS AGAINST CHRISTIANS AND THE CHURCH.

SEEK THE HEAVENLY EVERLASTING KINGDOM OF GOD AND HIS SON JESUS CHRIST AND NOT THE FADING WORLD WITH ITS SIN. SEEK WHAT IS PERMANENT AND NOT THE TEMPORARY. SEEK THINGS ABOVE AND NOT BENEATH.

Let us give attention to the words of Jesus to deny ourselves, take up our cross and follow Him. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it but whoever loses his life for His sake will find it (**Matthew 16:24 & 25**). In other words, following Christ is abandoning all sin and unrighteousness even at your discomfort to gain eternal life and eternal blessings.

FOLLOWING CHRIST MAKES YOU MOVE IN THE OPPOSITE DIRECTION IN LIFE BECAUSE YOUR CONSTITUTION IS THE BIBLE, FAITH IN JESUS CHRIST AND RIGHTEOUS WORKS, GIFTS AND FRUIT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT TO GOD. YOU FEEL THE PAIN, REJECTION, ABANDONMENT AND THE OPPOSITIONS EVERYWHERE THERE ARE LOVERS OF SIN, EVIL AND WICKEDNESS.

We read

Colossians 3:1 – 4 If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory.

Apostle Paul's message to the Church in Colosse clearly states that the new heart and mind of the Believing Christian makes him or her have a heavenly taste to seek God and His Son Jesus Christ. It's the work of the Holy Spirit to grow unto maturity in Christ.

It means to say that you lose taste of worldly things that mitigate against your Christian faith. Since your life is hidden with Christ to God through His death, you died to sin when you believed in Jesus as Saviour and Lord, and by the Holy Spirit, you look forward to the hope of His coming and resurrection. Therefore you live purposely with heaven in mind and not carelessly in this life to sin.

BELIEVING CHRISTIANS, CHRISTIAN LEADERS AND MINISTERS WHO LIVE PURPOSELY ARE HEAVEN FOCUSED. CARELESS LIVING IN THIS LIFE IS AVERTED BECAUSE THEIR LIVES ARE HIDDEN WITH CHRIST IN GOD AND THEY LOOK FORWARD TO THE HOPE OF HIS COMING.

We read

1 John 2:15 – 17 Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world. And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever.

The Apostle John makes a distinction between the love of the Father and the love for this world. Whereas the love for the Father is complete obedience of the gospel of Jesus Christ by the Holy Spirit, the love for this world is lust of the flesh, lust of the eyes and pride of this life. Whoever attempts to balance the two, falters in sin because the love for the Father makes you righteous and holy whereas the love for this world is sin, backsliding, corruption and unrighteousness. And the prophetic word is that the world and its lust is passing away and this is made clear with the hope of Christ's coming.

YOU CANNOT MARRY THE TWO: THE LOVE OF THE FATHER IN RIGHTEOUSNESS AND HOLINESS WITH THE LOVE OF THIS WORLD OF SIN, EVIL, BACKSLIDING AND WICKEDNESS. ANY ATTEMPT IS CORRUPTION OF YOUR CHRISTIAN FAITH. BE WISE AND CHOOSE RIGHT OF THE LOVE OF THE FATHER WITH ETERNAL BLESSINGS.

We are not different from the Church of Corinth and these five messages of Paul are applicable to the Church today, tomorrow and the future until Jesus returns. Despite the troubles of this world with evil pressures mitigating against our Christian faith, let us be guided with knowledge and wisdom of the gospel of Jesus Christ and leading of the Holy Spirit as a Believing Christian and the Church. Let us make our eternal contributions.

PRAYER

Dear Lord, help us to maintain our faith in You all the time.

Help us to believe in Your promises, blessings and warnings in God to be heaven focused and not worldly focused.

Let our tastes and passion be in Your word of salvation and works and fruit of the Holy Spirit as Believing Christians, Christian leaders and Ministers.

Give us a heart of wisdom to number our days on earth and live righteously and purposively in Jesus' name. Amen.

TO LIVE AS THOUGH NOT IS TO HAVE THE MIND OF CHRIST TO BE HEAVEN FOCUSED AND NOT EARTHLY FOCUSED. FOR BEING HEAVEN FOCUSED IS MORE REWARDING AND REJOICING THAN BEING EARTHLY FOCUSED WITH ITS TROUBLES AND REGRETS. **NANA KWAKU DUODU**

WE CANNOT STOP WORLDLY EVIL AND PRESSURES AGAINST OUR CHRISTIAN FAITH, CHRISTIAN WORKS, MINISTRIES AND WORKS IN THE CHURCH. RATHER WE TAKE THE WARNING OF APOSTLE PAUL SERIOUSLY BELIEVING THAT THE TIME IS SHORT WITH CHRIST'S COMING AND OUR OWN DEMISE ON EARTH ONE DAY. WE HAVE THE POWER AND GRACE TO ENDURE ALL PERSECUTIONS AND OVERCOME AS A CHURCH AND TO BE COMMITTED AND FAITHFUL IN THE LORD'S SERVICE. **NANA KWAKU DUODU**

IF BELIEVING CHRISTIANS, CHRISTIAN LEADERS AND MINISTERS ARE ABLE TO DENY THEMSELVES AND THE WORLD WITH ITS LUSTS, THEN THE HOPE OF CHRIST'S COMING AND ETERNAL PROMISES AND ETERNAL BLESSINGS ARE TO BE EXPERIENCED. LIKE THE CORINTHIANS, LET US LIVE RIGHTEOUSLY AND PURPOSIVELY BECAUSE THE HOLY SPIRIT IS IN US. **NANA KWAKU DUODU**

FOCUS AND DISTRACTION ARE NOT BEDFELLOWS IN THE CHRISTIAN FAITH

INSPIRATION

The bible says that good counsels are a reflection of the thoughts of the righteous unlike the deceitfulness of the wicked (**Proverbs 12:5**). Again the bible says that counsel in the heart of man is like deep water but a man of understanding will draw it out (**Proverbs 20:5**). Hence Paul's righteous counsels to the Church of Corinth and other Churches was based on understanding of their strengths and weaknesses. Let's study further.

1 Corinthians 7:32 – 35 But I want you to be without care. He who is unmarried cares for the things of the Lord—how he may please the Lord. But he who is married cares about the things of the world—how he may please his wife. There is a difference between a wife and a virgin. The unmarried woman cares about the things of the Lord, that she may be holy both in body and in spirit. But she who is married cares about the things of the world—how she may please her husband. And this I say for your own profit, not that I may put a leash on you, but for what is proper, and that you may serve the Lord without distraction.

This was Paul's counsel to the Corinthians Believers: **But I want you to be without care (1 Corinthians 7:32a)** was a statement to signify the need for Christians and be wary of the cares of this world to maintain their Christian faith and attainment of eternal salvation. This warning was based on revelation and truth about the urgency of the times and seasons and not on fallacy.

THE COUNSEL OF A SPIRITUAL FATHER IS BASED ON OBSERVATION, EXPERIENCE, REVELATION AND FORESIGHT FOR A TURNAROUND.

The Church of Corinth recorded two groups of people of the unmarried and married. Paul saw that the attitude and contributions of the unmarried edified the Church: **He who is unmarried cares for the things of the Lord—how he may please the Lord (1 Corinthians 7:32b)**. The observed trend was that the unmarried Christians had time for the Lord's work; attended prayer meetings, bible studies, evangelized, and Sunday services and always available to make the Church strong and vibrant in the power of the Holy Spirit. Their ultimate desire and motive was ways and means to please the Lord; ways and means to make their works and contributions acceptable to the Lord.

It means to say that they showed full commitment and responded quickly and timely to all Church programs and activities. These were the lead players in the Church and were used by God mightily to fulfill His purposes in Christ by the Holy Spirit. Like Jesus said: **My food is to do the work of Him who sent Me and to finish His work (John 4:34)**.

THE HOLY SPIRIT WORKS POWERFULLY IN THE LIVES OF COMMITTED CHRISTIANS WHO HAVE NO IDOLS IN THEIR HEARTS BECAUSE THEY SERVE

GOD WITHOUT DISTRACTIONS IN THE CHURCH. IN THE DAYS OF PAUL, UNMARRIED BELIEVING CHRISTIANS PROVED THEMSELVES TO BE EFFECTIVE, COMMITTED, AND FAITHFUL, AND RESULTS ORIENTED BECAUSE THEY HAD NO MARITAL RESPONSIBILITIES.

Paul saw that the attitude and contributions of the married lacked the expected impetus in service to the Lord and the Church: **But he who is married cares about the things of the world—how he may please his wife (1 Corinthians 7:33).** It was also observed that the married became busy with marriage responsibilities and absented themselves in Church meetings and programs. They had to make their spouses happy at all costs at the expense of their Christian relationships and responsibilities; even if they stopped going to Church or went to Church late or absented themselves from Church meetings and programs.

It is also a reminder of the words of Jesus about qualification and measurement of His disciples: If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it **(Matthew 16:24 & 25, Mark 8:34 & 35, Luke 9:23 & 24).**

THE HOLY SPIRIT POWER IS LIMITED IN CHRISTIAN COUPLES WHO HAVE SPOUSAL IDOLS AND RESPONSIBILITIES THAT BECOME CHALLENGES TO COMMITMENT, CHURCH GROWTH, MATURITY AND EVEN ATTAINMENT OF ETERNAL LIFE. UNDER SUCH CONDITIONS, THE EXCUSES ARE MANY ALL THE TIME.

Apostle Paul emphasized on the position in the Corinthian Church with regards to holiness and care differences between the unmarried and the married: **There is a difference between a wife and a virgin (1 Corinthians 7:34a).**

According to the gospel of Paul, the Church and Kingdom of God benefit greatly from the service of the unmarried woman: **The unmarried woman cares about the things of the Lord, that she may be holy both in body and in spirit (1 Corinthians 7:34b).**

According to the gospel of Paul, the Church and Kingdom of God do not benefit greatly from the service of the married woman: **But she who is married cares about the things of the world—how she may please her husband (1 Corinthians 7:34c).**

He realized that the unmarried in the Church lived holy lives, and performed righteous works and fully supported the Church in various forms. Besides, they were serious in their Christian relationships that usage and management of them was easy.

On the other side, almost all the problems in the Church recorded married people. They brought their marital problems with spouses and children into the Church. Commitment and faithfulness was affected because their marriages and homes replaced the Church in their hearts and lives. Not that marriage is bad but encountered challenges and

problems were not properly handled and therefore manipulated by the devil against the Church.

THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE UNMARRIED AND MARRIED CHRISTIANS IN THE CHURCH IS THE OPPORTUNITY AND RESPONSE TO BE FOCUSED AND COMMITTED FOR SPIRITUAL GROWTH AND MATURITY BY THE HOLY SPIRIT. THIS SEEMS TO FAVOUR THE FORMER UNLIKE THE LATTER TO SIGNIFY THE IMPORTANCE OF KNOWING CHRIST AND WORSHIPPING GOD WHOLEHEARTEDLY.

And this I say for your own profit, not that I may put a leash on you, but for what is proper, and that you may serve the Lord without distraction (1 Corinthians 7:35).

Apostle Paul's further instruction to the Corinthians Believers revealed his righteous intent and purposes towards them. To make both the unmarried and married become effective, committed and faithful in service to the Lord, he did not put a leash on them like a dog but showed them the way of righteousness in love. This was purpose driven to make them profitable, in undistracted service, to the Church and the Kingdom of God.

The dictionary meaning to put a leash on someone is to control someone carefully and only allow them a small amount of freedom to do what they want. In other words, Paul did not want to restrict or restrain them at all but provided solutions for understanding and spurred them to active service in the Lord's Vineyard. What Paul did was to strengthen the Church and revived them to works of righteousness.

The bible says that the Prophet Samuel assured the Israelites of prophetic directions to make their relationship with God better and results oriented: Moreover, as for me, far be it from me that I should sin against the Lord in ceasing to pray for you; but I will teach you the good and right way **(1 Samuel 12:23)**. Jesus prayed for Peter to be delivered from the devil and be strengthened and also to strengthen the disciples: **And the Lord said, "Simon, Simon! Indeed Satan has asked for you, that he may sift you as wheat. But I have prayed for you, that your faith should not fail; and when you have returned to Me, strengthen your brethren."** **(Luke 22:31 & 32)**

The mind and heart of a true father like Apostle Paul was good towards the Church as evidenced by his righteous principles and instructions. This was to prepare them spiritually, physically and psychologically in their Christian relationships, the Church and the Body of Christ towards the attainment of Church growth, maturity and eternal life. Distraction was an enemy but focus was a friend to their spiritual growth and maturity. For him, anything or somebody that distracts you from living right, doing the works of God, inhibits the power of the Holy Spirit and attaining eternal life should be overlooked even if it is marriage.

DISTRACTION IS AN ENEMY BUT FOCUS BY THE HOLY SPIRIT IS A FRIEND TO SPIRITUAL GROWTH AND MATURITY IN THE CHRISTIAN FAITH AND THE CHURCH.

We read

Luke 9:57 – 62 Now it happened as they journeyed on the road, that someone said to Him, “Lord, I will follow You wherever You go.” And Jesus said to him, “Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head.” Then He said to another, “Follow Me.” But he said, “Lord, let me first go and bury my father.” Jesus said to him, “Let the dead bury their own dead, but you go and preach the kingdom of God.” And another also said, “Lord, I will follow You, but let me first go and bid them farewell who are at my house.” But Jesus said to him, “No one, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.”

The New King James Bible Commentary states that the disciple who wanted to follow Jesus passionately did not count the cost realistically but acted on his feelings at the moment. This would not be enough to sustain him during the trials that lay ahead Jesus replied that He as the Son of Man did not have the comforts of the home.

Again another passionate disciple wanted to follow Jesus but had to go and bury the father first. But Jesus replied that the dead must bury their dead. He revealed this man’s problem as putting family responsibilities ahead of his decision to follow him. The call of God required setting clear priorities over everything and the man needed to overcome it. The concerns at home was the man’s stumbling block. Unlike the previous volunteer, this man was slow, meditative and contemplative. He was counting the cost of discipleship. Cultic purity was viewed as very important in Jewish circles, so a quick burial of the dead was required.

Furthermore another passionate disciple wanted to follow Jesus but needed to say goodbye to his family first. But Jesus replied that no one having put his hand to the plough and looking back is fit for service in the kingdom of God. Thus a disciple must have clear priorities. The call of God should receive priority over everything else.

The lessons that Jesus wants us to learn is that the call of God to follow Him requires total commitment before answering the call. Once this righteous decision is made, the cares of this world, family influences and manipulation and indecisiveness cannot be used by the devil against you. In other words, commitment and faithfulness on the Christian journey and works are preferred to distractions from self, family, friends and any other attachment in life and ministry.

This is why Paul wrote to the Corinthians that being a single believing Christian gives you hundred percent commitment to the works of God unlike married Believing Christians with responsibilities to their spouses too. It means to do greater works by the Holy Spirit as a single person before you get married with marital and children responsibilities. All the same, make your Christian responsibilities a reality of any capacity in life.

PRAYER

Our prayer is that decisions by revelation will make us show total commitment and faithfulness to the works of God in Christ by the Holy Spirit.

Before we enjoy Your blessings with other responsibilities, may we have the grace to care and show total commitment and faithfulness to Christ's vision and mission in revelation without excuses.

In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

THE BIG DIFFERENCE BETWEEN SINGLE BELIEVING CHRISTIANS AND MARRIED BELIEVING CHRISTIANS, IN DOING THE WORKS OF GOD, IS THAT THE FORMER IS ABLE TO SHOW TOTAL COMMITMENT UNLIKE THE LATTER. HENCE I AGREE WITH PAUL TO MAKE THE BEST OF YOUR STRENGTH, ENERGY AND TIME TO PRAY, PREACH, TEACH, COUNSEL AND SHOW LEADERSHIP BY EXAMPLE AS A BELIEVING CHRISTIAN, CHRISTIAN LEADER AND MINISTER BEFORE YOU MARRY AND HAVE MANY MARITAL RESPONSIBILITIES. FOR MINISTRY WORKS REQUIRE FOCUS AND CONCENTRATION WITHOUT EXCUSES AND DISTRACTIONS. NANA KWAKU DUODU.

THE CHURCH DOES NOT NEED A LEASH TO CONTROL BELIEVING CHRISTIANS TO RESPOND TO CHURCH WORKS AND PRINCIPLES OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD LIKE DOGS. RATHER, UNDERSTANDING OF DIVINE INSTRUCTIONS AND REVELATIONS ARE A NECESSARY RIGHTEOUSNESS TO SPUR ON GOOD ATTITUDES AND RESPONSIBILITIES THAT ENSURE TOTAL COMMITMENT AND FAITHFULNESS. NANA KWAKU DUODU

MARRY; REMAIN A VIRGIN OR A WIDOW IF YOU CAN – ALL FOR CHRIST

INSPIRATION

The bible says that good counsels are a reflection of the thoughts of the righteous unlike the deceitfulness of the wicked (**Proverbs 12:5**). Again the bible says that counsel in the heart of man is like deep water but a man of understanding will draw it out (**Proverbs 20:5**). Hence Paul's righteous counsels to the Church of Corinth and other Churches was based on understanding of their strengths and weaknesses. Let's study further.

1 Corinthians 7:36 – 40 But if any man thinks he is behaving improperly toward his virgin, if she is past the flower of youth, and thus it must be, let him do what he wishes. He does not sin; let them marry. Nevertheless he who stands steadfast in his heart, having no necessity, but has power over his own will, and has so determined in his heart that he will keep his virgin, does well. So then he who gives her in marriage does well, but he who does not give her in marriage does better. 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. But she is happier if she remains as she is, according to my judgment—and I think I also have the Spirit of God.

Apostle Paul's message centred on the relationship between a man and woman who are not yet married and action to be taken when the man thinks he has begun touching her sexually. He stated that: **But if any man thinks he is behaving improperly toward his virgin, if she is past the flower of youth, and thus it must be, let him do what he wishes. He does not sin; let them marry (1 Corinthians 7:36).**

The major emphasis of this scripture by Apostle Paul is bearing the fruit of self – control as a Christian filled with the Holy Spirit whether single, virgin or married or widow.

He noticed the battle between the flesh and the spirit as a Christian virgin or Christian couple. Why should the Christian man burn with passion towards his virgin lady when he could easily marry her? Why be in a relationship for a long time with a woman and burn with passion to sin when the Christian man can easily seek parental consent to marry her? His message was that it is righteous to desire marriage and fulfill it to be holy unto the Lord.

The bible says that Jesus believed in marriages and attended a wedding in Cana of Galilee with the miraculous provision of sweet wine from water (**John 2:1 – 11**). Marriage is the procreation agenda of God to establish His agenda on earth. In other words, performance of marriage rites to the family of the woman by the family of the man is accepted as righteous in the sight of God. This is why the parents of Samson went and sought the hand of a woman in Timnah of the Philistines because he desired

her as a wife (**Judges 14:1 – 20**). Also Boaz married Ruth because she proved herself to him as a virtuous woman (**Ruth 2:1 – 23, 3:1 – 11, 4:1 – 14**).

THE TEMPTATION TO BE INVOLVED IN SEXUAL IMMORALITIES WITH YOUR LOVER IS HIGH. BEARING THE FRUIT OF SELF – CONTROL IS A NECESSITY: MARRY IF YOU CAN IN A RIGHTEOUS MANNER. IT'S THE RIGHTEOUS SOLUTION THAT WORKS EFFECTIVELY AND NEEDS CHURCH ENCOURAGEMENT AND ENFORCEMENT.

However, if the single Christian man has power over his will to bear the fruit of self – control, then it is better for him spiritually because when he is influenced by the Holy Spirit to behave righteously towards the woman. He stated that: **Nevertheless he who stands steadfast in his heart, having no necessity, but has power over his own will, and has so determined in his heart that he will keep his virgin, does well (1 Corinthians 7:37)**. This is a personal decision and conviction to relate with women and yet does not burn with passion to sin even secretly should be encouraged for the sake of the Kingdom of God and not condemned as being barren or foolish in life.

Know that comparison with contemporaries are inevitable by societal and family descriptions. Hence Paul's message to make the Church of Corinth understand the dynamics of God in the affairs of His people to accomplish divine assignments with eternal blessings and benefits for the Churches and humanity.

For him, celibacy in holiness for life (no marriage) is better than unfaithfulness and corruption of the body and the Christian faith through lust and the commitment of sexual immoralities. Let me state here also that there can be periodic celibacy for long as a righteous decision to keep yourself from sexual immoralities before marriage. For some late marriages of men show signs of long period of celibacy.

BEARING THE FRUIT OF SELF – CONTROL IS A PERSONAL CONVICTION TO PRACTICE CELIBACY FOR LIFE WITH NO MARRIAGE TO A WOMAN (NO FORNICATION; NO SEXUAL IMMORALITIES: MASTURBATION, LESBIANISM, GAY SEX, SODOMY, PROSTITUTION, VISUAL AND AUDIO AND WRITING PORNOGRAPHY).

Paul states that: **So then he who gives her in marriage does well, but he who does not give her in marriage does better (1 Corinthians 7:38)**. Christian parents must be discerning to know the will of God and the character of interested men as partners towards their female children and make righteous decisions to give them in marriage or not. Remember Christian marriages can make your faith in Christ strong whereas being married to an unbeliever can weaken your Christian faith and cast a doubt on your attainment of eternal life or Church contributions or eternal contributions by the Holy Spirit. It portrays closer knowledge and influence in the affairs of Christian parents and children eligible for marriage in the Church than unbelieving parents and children. Even

worldly people make sure that their sons and daughters marry rightly under good conditions such as proven character and good habits.

BOTH BIOLOGICAL PARENTS AND CHURCH LEADERS HAVE A ROLE TO PLAY PRAYERFULLY IN SUPPORT OF CELIBATE LIVES AND MARRIAGES IN THE FAMILIES AND CHURCHES RESPECTIVELY.

Again Apostle Paul points out the truth that marriage is of God and is for life and not for experimental, or lustful reasons and at one's discretion to divorce. He stated that: **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 (1 Corinthians 7:39).**

Therefore in marriage, the law requires faithfulness of the couple till death and permanent separation takes place where there is opportunity for a new partner if so desired and in God's will. Let me state here clearly that like all marriages of Believing Christians, it must be in Christ beyond family marriage rites whether as virgins or widows or widowers, or divorced.

Paul makes the same analogy in his message to the Roman Church when he said that the Believers were dead to the law because they were married to Christ under the New Covenant **(Romans 7:1 – 3)**. Indeed what is dead is dead but what is alive has hope of blessing and rejuvenation.

Even though Jesus stated that divorce in marriage is accepted on the condition of sexual immorality **(Matthew 19:1 – 9)**, this refers to the extreme case but still has the love and mercy of God to forgive your spouse. This is to buttress the message that marriage in God's will is for life with no mind for divorce to ensure the fulfillment of God's promises and blessings in our lives, children, families, ministries and the Churches.

The bible says that he who finds a wife has found a good thing and receives favour from the Lord **(Proverbs 18:22)**. This marriage blessing and favour are tied to finding a wife; marriage between a man and a woman and not of the same sex. It is also true that when conditions of life are tough, sometimes people think that it is worthy not to marry and they have children outside marriage just to continue family lines. Even the disciples of Jesus believed that it is better not to marry when Jesus spoke against the sin of marrying a divorced sexually immoral woman to commit adultery **(Matthew 19:9 & 10)**.

RESPECT THE MARRIAGE INSTITUTION AS GOD ORDAINED FOR ALL PEOPLE, CHRISTIANS AND THE CHURCH TO BE HOLY AND RIGHTEOUS. FOR IN MARRIAGES, CERTAIN BLESSINGS AND FAVOURS OF GOD ARE RECEIVED.

In his judgment, Apostle Paul believes that it is better for widows with strong libido levels to remarry in the Lord than to be involved in sexual immoralities. That is to marry

a fellow Christian and not an unbeliever. Here the Holy Spirit can work better in the lives of the Christian couple to be holy, righteous and make the Church the light to the world.

WIDOWS MUST REMARRY IN THE LORD IF THEY BURN WITH PASSION AS CHRISTIANS. FOR THE HOLY SPIRIT IS IN THEM TO MAKE GOOD JUDGMENTS AND BE HOLY AND RIGHTEOUS; PEACE WITH GOD.

Apostle Paul stated again that it is better for widows not to remarry because of the challenges and problems in marriage. He stated that: **But she is happier if she remains as she is, according to my judgment—and I think I also have the Spirit of God (1 Corinthians 7:40)**. This righteous counsel of God was quickly adjudged to be from the realm of the Spirit to promote holiness.

Better still, it is an opportunity to worship and serve God well as widows in the power of the Holy Spirit and thus make righteous contributions in the Churches. Like in Paul's days, some of the most prayerful people in the Churches are widows whose contributions to the ministries, spiritual growth and maturity of the Believing Christians are righteous in God's sight.

The bible testifies of the Prophetess Anna who was a widow of about eighty – four years. She married her husband as a virgin for seven years and then became a widow. She spent all her widowed years in the Jerusalem temple praying day and night with fastings and waited for the revelation of the Messiah as foretold by the Holy Spirit. She saw the Messiah Jesus as a baby and prophesied joyfully over Him as the Saviour and hope to all who waited for the fulfillment of the messianic prophecy **(Luke 2:36 – 38)**.

HAVING THE HOLY SPIRIT, WIDOWS CAN BEAR THE FRUIT OF SELF – CONTROL TO REMAIN UNMARRIED FOR THE LORD JESUS CHRIST. FOR THEY ARE FREE TO SERVE THE LORD JESUS CHRIST WITHOUT MARITAL OBLIGATIONS.

The conclusive message of Apostle Paul in this chapter reveals the questions in the minds and mouths of Christians when Christian messages are tough, thought provoking, and touches our ego, tradition, self – doctrines and righteousness, and passions.

The question arises as to the authority in which Apostle Paul opened the Word of God to the Church with regards to marriages, virgins and widows. This makes it important to speak the mind and write the word of God and mind of God in the power and inspiration of the Holy Spirit. He expected the Church in Corinth to understand that he spoke and wrote these messages by the inspiration, wisdom and power of the Holy Spirit and not by his whims and caprices. This was borne out of concern, prayer and apostolic mandate as a true spiritual father to destroy the works of the devil, correct thwarted doctrines of the Church and direct his children in the ways of Christ.

Yes Jesus earlier spoke about people either born as eunuchs, people made eunuchs by their fellow men and self – made eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of heaven. This seemed to be hard sayings but those who were able to accept these realities should so joyfully **(Matthew 19:12)**.

KNOW YOUR CALLING AND AUTHORITY: SPEAK BY THE INSPIRATION, WISDOM, REVELATION AND POWER OF THE HOLY SPIRIT TO REVEAL THE MIND OF CHRIST, THE WORD OF GOD AND CHRIST'S WAYS TO HIS CHURCH.

We read

Ephesians 2:20 – 22 having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner stone, in whom the whole building, being fitted together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.

To the Church of Ephesus, Paul reminded them that the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets was the gospel of Jesus Christ where all other building structures are connected to form a beautiful and glorious spiritual building with a place for all Believing Christians. This explains why the Church is able to distinguish between sound Christian doctrines and teachings from the false ones. For is the end of the law and spirit and letter of the Church endorsed by God through the Holy Spirit.

THE CHRISTIAN FAITH IS BUILT ON THE FOUNDATION OF THE APOSTLES AND THE PROPHETS WITH JESUS CHRIST AS THE CHIEF; YES THE HEAD AND THE BOSS.

PRAYER

As a Church, we pray for open heavens over our lives, ministries and the Church.

Let the counsels of Your word and Holy Spirit continue to guide us in marriages, celibates and as widows or widowers in times and seasons of life.

We pray that our choices will be in Your perfect will do so that we secure our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

We pray that we will be pleasing in thy sight to make Your Holy Spirit use us to perform righteous works in Jesus' name. Amen.

GOD IS INTERESTED IN THE AFFAIRS OF BELIEVING CHRISTIANS, CHRISTIAN LEADERS AND MINISTERS JUST AS PARENTS SHOW INTERESTS IN THAT OF THEIR CHILDREN. EVEN AS MARRIED, CELIBATES AND WIDOWS OR WIDOWERS, CHRIST MUST BE FORMED IN US TO MAKE US HEAVEN BOUND.

AND THIS SHOULD BE THE HEART AND CONCERN OF BIOLOGICAL PARENTS, GUARDIANS AND THE CHURCH. **NANA KWAKU DUODU**

VIRGIN, SINGLNESS, MARRIAGE, DIVORCE, WIDOW AND WIDOWED THAT HAS NO ETERNAL CONNECTION AND BLESINGS WITH THE LORD JESUS CHRIST IS DISCOURAGED BY THE CHURCH. BUT IF THEY ARE CONNECTED WITH THE WILL OF GOD IN CHRIST BY THE HOLY SPIRIT IN YOUR LIFE AND MINISTRY, THE CHURCH AND THE KINGDOM OF GOD WOULD BE BENEFICIARIES. **NANA KWAKU DUODU**

MARRIAGE FACILTATES PROCREATION AS GOD ORDAINED IN THE GARDEN OF EDEN BUT THE GOSPEL OF JESUS CHRIST AND THE GOSPEL OF PAUL TEACHES THAT MARRY SOMEONE WHO WILL BE A HELPER TO YOUR ENTRY INTO HEAVEN AND NOT HELL. **NANA KWAKU DUODU**



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