

**THE MARRIAGE MYSTERY
INTIMACY**

1 Corinthians 7:1-5

If you are going through this guide as a Small Group, consider breaking off into gender specific groups for this week.

THE CONTEXT (vv. 1-2)

1. Some in church history have wrongly interpreted verse one to say that sexual intimacy is not good. Look carefully at the wording in this verse. Who makes that statement? Does Paul agree with it?
2. In verse two, Paul seems to argue for the validity of sexual intimacy. According to his words, in what context should we pursue sexual intimacy?
 - How can we affirm a godly view of sexual intimacy in our lives and in the discipleship of others (family, friends, neighbors, etc.)?
 - Why should we not allow for sexual intimacy in any context?
3. Is this limitation of sex prohibitive? Why are good laws beneficial?

THE HUMILITY (vv. 3-4)

1. In verse three, we are given a general principle for the guidelines of healthy and godly sexual relations. According to this verse, who is in charge of the sexual relationship—the man or the woman?
 - Who has the rights? Why should either partner be willing to participate in sexual activity?
2. In verse four, Paul says that the husband and wife do not have authority over their own bodies (in the context of intimacy). Does our culture agree?
 - What prevents one spouse from sexually abusing the other? If neither has authority over their own body, what happens if they do not agree on the frequency or mode of intimacy?

THE AIM (v. 5)

1. Verse five says sexual relations are not ultimate. How does Paul teach that?
 - Paul says that sexual intimacy should only be halted by mutual consent and for a spiritual purpose. When might you see that happening today?
2. What warning does this verse give in regard to regular sexual intimacy? How might a couple experience this consequence today? How frequently should a couple be involved in intimate relations?
3. Reread verses 26-27. How has Christ lived out this verse for us? How did Christ do this for his Church in ways that are different than what a husband is able to do for his wife?

FAMILY DISCIPLESHIP QUESTIONS

1. What is marriage (take time to affirm what your children know about marriage and help them see the bigger picture of the beauty of marriage and what it points to)?
2. Why is it important that mommies and daddies stay together (using age-appropriate words, talk about the importance of the permanence of marriage, marriage vows, and unity in marriage. Be honest about the reality of hardship)?
3. Why is it important that mommies and daddies love each other a lot (using age-appropriate words, talk about God's design for intimacy in marriage)?

APPLICATION

- In which areas have you struggled to follow the direction from this text? Spend time asking the Lord and listening for his answer. As he reveals those weaknesses, share them either with your spouse (if you are married) or with a close friend (if you are single). If appropriate, you may want to seek counsel from a trusted Christian brother or sister of the same gender.
- If you are married, sit down with your spouse and use this passage to help you write down some guidelines for a biblical pattern of sexual intimacy. Talk through what it would look like for you to love each other in a way that seeks to “outdo one another in showing honor” (Rom. 12:10). Consider finding a trusted couple to counsel you in this area. If you are single, take this opportunity to pray about your singleness. Share your joys, frustrations, and longings with the Lord. Ask him how you can better honor him in your singleness, as it relates specifically to your sexuality.
- Psalm 101:2-3 says “I will walk with integrity of heart in my house. I will not set before my eyes anything that is worthless.” Write down how you will resist the temptation of the devil through self-control and integrity of heart. Pray and commit yourself to walk with integrity.

For additional Marriage Mystery Discussion Guide content & resources, visit yourchurch.com/marriagemystery.