

*I Corinthians 7:7-9*  
*To marry or not to marry?*

- Should I marry? Whom should I marry? If there is one subject that provides a laboratory for our understanding of decision-making and God's will, this is it.
- The seventh chapter of I Corinthians is an important Scriptural window into how we should think about making decisions about many issues.
- For more detailed study of this subject go to [apptoteach.org](http://apptoteach.org) theology files #205, #306
- Paul concluded the last section with verse 6 “**But this I say by way of concession, not of command.**”

**A. Scripture describes God's will in different ways.**

1. His **DETERMINED WILL** or His **SOVEREIGN WILL** is that which is preordained and mysterious to us until after the fact.
2. His **DECLARED WILL** or His **MORAL WILL** is that which is expressed as His desire for what people should believe and how they should act and why they should do so.
3. His **DYNAMIC WILL** or His **CHANGING WILL** is that response to our actions that is in keeping with the personal interrelationship between God and His people (who are free moral agents).
4. His **DETAILED WILL** or His **PERSONAL WILL** is that specific life plan for an individual. It is this expression of God's will that is most misunderstood.

**B. The Spirit's guidance comes in different ways.**

1. **COMMANDS** - rather specific mandates, principles, and examples that we are expected to follow if we walk in the Spirit of Christ.
  - a. **Mandates** (normative and universally applicable)
    1. Our callings or goals - Evangelizing His world - Matt.28:19-20
    2. Our attitudes or motives - Love, not selfishness — Mk.12:28-31; Rom.13:14; 14:13-19; I Cor.13:1-3
  - b. **Principles** (applied by individuals in individual circumstances)
    1. The principle of Glory to God (I Cor.10:31; Rom.15:6)
    2. The principle of Liberty (I Cor.6:12; Gal.5:13)
    3. The principle of Expediency (I Cor.6:12)
  - c. **Examples** (The moral values of Jesus and the Apostles are shown by example.)
2. **COUNSEL** - an appeal to what seems wise realizing that there is freedom to move in different directions. I Cor.7:35 “And this I say for your own benefit; not to put a restraint upon you, but to promote what is seemly, and to secure undistracted devotion to the Lord.”
3. **CONCESSION** - an acknowledgement of freedom to move in differing directions. I Cor.7:6 “But this I say by way of concession, not of command.”

**C. We may have more than one option within God's will.**

“7 Yet I wish that all men were even as I myself am. However, each man has his own gift from God, one in this manner, and another in that. 8 But I say to the unmarried and to widows that it is good for them if they remain even as I. 9 But if they do not have self-control, let them marry; for it is better to marry than to burn.”

**D. Decision making is more about wisdom than private revelation.**

**James 1:5** “But if any on you lacks **wisdom**, let him ask of God, who gives to all men generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him.”

**E. Wisdom in decision-making starts with knowing God and one's self.**

**I Cor.7:7** “However, each man has his own gift from God, one in this manner, and another in that.”

**F. Decision-making involves counting the cost of different options.**

**I Cor.7:9** “But if they do not have self-control, let them marry; for it is better to marry than to burn.”

**HOW DO WE MAKE DECISIONS?**

**Matthew 25:14-30**

“14 For {it is} just like a man {about} to go on a journey, who called his own slaves, and entrusted his possessions to them. 15 And to one he gave five talents, to another, two, and to another, one, each according to his own ability; and he went on his journey. . . 24 And the one also who had received the one talent came up and said, ‘Master, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you did not sow, and gathering where you scattered no {seed.} 25 And I was afraid, and went away and hid your talent in the ground; see, you have what is yours.’ 26 But his master answered and said to him, ‘You wicked, lazy slave, you knew that I reap where I did not sow, and gather where I scattered no {seed.} 27 Then you ought to have put my money in the bank, and on my arrival I would have received my {money} back with interest. 28 Therefore take away the talent from him, and give it to the one who has the ten talents.’ 29 For to everyone who has shall {more} be given, and he shall have an abundance; but from the one who does not have, even what he does have shall be taken away. 30 And cast out the worthless slave into the outer darkness; in that place there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”

- **In Matthew 25:14-30 (a parable of stewardship and decision-making) we are encouraged to use creativity & common sense in making decisions.**

1. The first two slaves represent a positive example:
  - a. They knew that their master expected them to do something constructive with the resources he gave them.
  - b. They took risks.
  - c. They did not have specific details as to what decisions to make.
  - d. They were successful in making decisions with their own creativity.
  - e. They were commended by the master.
  - f. They were given more responsibility.
2. The third slave is a negative example:

- a. He was paralyzed by fear of not doing the right thing for the master.
  - b. He was conservative and took no risks.
  - c. He was labeled as "wicked and lazy" by the master.
  - d. He lost the little that he had.
3. Following God's will may involve exercising creative risks in making decisions without specific leading on every detail or element. His leading may be more like a compass than a road map.
- **In I Corinthians 7 Paul addresses one of the most common questions with respect to "God's will" - Should I marry and whom should I marry?**
    1. It is significant that Paul suggests that "what was good" in Gen.2:18 is not necessarily mandated in Corinth. (vs.1 "it is good for a man not to touch a woman.")
    2. Circumstances can influence a decision. (vs.2 "But because of immoralities")
    3. Paul's words come not as a command but a concession. (vs.6 "But this I say by way of concession, not of command.")
    4. Paul "wishes" (vs.7) that others remain single but he does not instruct them to do so because he realizes they should have freedom in such decisions.
    5. In verse 28 Paul says "But if you should marry, you have not sinned, . . . Yet such will have trouble in this life, and I am trying to spare you." Again, Paul is giving advice but respecting a range of decisions.
    6. In verse 39 Paul gives the only clear boundary. "A wife is bound as long as her husband lives; but if her husband is dead, she is free to be married to whom she wishes, only in the Lord." The phrase "in the Lord" is synonymous with "a believer."