

1Cor. 7:1 Now concerning the things whereof ye wrote unto me: *It is good for a man not to touch a woman.*

The wording here indicates that Paul is giving answer to questions or problems that the church at Corinth had written him about. As I read through the different translations, the Complete Jewish Bible translation stood out:

Now to deal with the questions you wrote about: "Is it good for a man to keep away from women?"

Of course, I don't know Greek, but this translation made sense to me. We know that Paul didn't teach against marriage (as the other translations would seem to indicate at first read), although he did indicate that the single life was best regarding one's ability to maintain a spiritual focus in life (cf verse 34-35 of this chapter). The Corinthians wrote Paul with a question, which he seems to be identifying at this point.

1Cor. 7:2 Nevertheless, to avoid fornication, let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband.

It would seem that Paul's main argument for marriage was to help men/women avoid fornication, a sexual relationship outside of marriage. He was well aware of the pressure of the culture of the day as well as man's own sexual nature.

Marriage was a relationship ordained by God that declared it a fitting outlet to meet man's physical and emotional needs for intimate fellowship and necessary for man's survival and growth and to populate the planet.

Gen. 2:18 And the LORD God said, *It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him.*

Gen. 2:22 And the rib, which the LORD God had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man.

Gen. 2:23 And Adam said, *This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man.*

Gen. 2:24 Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh.

Gen. 9:1 And God blessed Noah and his sons, and said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth.

1Cor. 7:3 Let the husband render unto the wife due benevolence: and likewise also the wife unto the husband.

1Cor. 7:4 The wife hath not power of her own body, but the husband: and likewise also the husband hath not power of his own body, but the wife.

1Cor. 7:5 Defraud ye not one the other, except *it be* with consent for a time, that ye may give yourselves to fasting and prayer; and come together again, that Satan tempt you not for your incontinency.

(4/11) "incontinency" = "want of self-restraint, excess"

These verses are an elaboration of the truth stated in Genesis 2:24 (see above)—"and they shall be one flesh." As one flesh, the man and woman are a necessary part of each other. God made man and woman distinctively different to be able to come together as one in an experience that brings pleasure and fulfillment one for the other. In this area of the marriage relationship, the partners are equal. The man's needs/wants do not carry more right/privilege than do those of the

woman and vice versa. The sexual part of a couple's relationship should meet the needs/desires of each partner and should not be a "privilege" that is to be withheld as a tool of manipulation or as an act of punishment for perceived wrong or such like. The only appropriate time of extended abstinence should be a time agreed upon for spiritual purposes, i.e. fasting and prayer. These times should be limited so as not to allow Satan an open door with temptation from other sources. Obviously, the needs/desires of individuals are different, and each couple determines what is good for their relationship. The key is to keep God at the center of your marriage.

1Cor. 7:6 But I speak this by permission, and not of commandment.

The wording of this verse seems to refer to the answer given by Paul in the previous verses. I think he is trying to make clear that it is not God's command for everyone to get married; the next verse seems to support this thought. Paul is just making a practical recommendation based on his observations about the nature of mankind.

1Cor. 7:7 For I would that all men were even as I myself. But every man hath his proper gift of God, one after this manner, and another after that.

1Cor. 7:8 I say therefore to the unmarried and widows, It is good for them if they abide even as I.

1Cor. 7:9 But if they cannot contain, let them marry: for it is better to marry than to burn.

Paul was not married, and his personal recommendation would be that everyone be single like him. Again, he will explain later on in the chapter that this is more conducive to one's ability to give priority to serving the Lord. The wording of the last half of verse 7 makes it sound like the need for marriage and the ability to be single represent a gifting from God. That makes sense to me as I think about those I know. I believe that marriage and singleness represent different areas of service before the Lord. Those who are blessed with marriage and family are given the privilege of raising up the next generation fit for God's use in accomplishing His plans and purposes or maybe they are just more fit to serve God as a couple. Those who are gifted with singleness are set apart for service that honors Him more completely by not having the distractions and responsibilities that would deter them from His purposes for their life. We are each unique pieces of the whole with specific areas of service/purpose, if we will but yield.

1Cor. 7:10 And unto the married I command, yet not I, but the Lord, Let not the wife depart from her husband:

1Cor. 7:11 But and if she depart, let her remain unmarried, or be reconciled to her husband: and let not the husband put away his wife.

I think it is interesting that though the whole letter is inspired by the Holy Spirit, Paul makes a distinction when he is speaking as representative of God and when he is speaking his own thoughts (as stated in verse 6 above). I hadn't really thought about it before, but I imagine that most, if not all, of the New Testament writers knew that they were writing scripture. They knew that the Old Testament scriptures were inspired by God, but they probably didn't recognize at the time of writing that their own writings were as divinely inspired.

Since the Holy Spirit inspired ALL scripture, Paul's thoughts were evidently in line with God's thoughts even though Paul was not certain of that fact. This truth, however, he is quite certain about. God does not want any marriage to end in divorce. Since God knows us inside out and realizes the struggle we have with our sin nature and our propensity to focus on self. He gives instruction regarding those who choose to or are forced into divorce. They are to remain unmarried or, better yet, seek reconciliation. It's a bit puzzling that this instruction is specifically directed to the wife. I think the solution is that Paul first addresses a situation in which the wife initiates the separation, and the last phrase of verse 11 seems to indicate that the same is meant regarding the husband who initiates the separation.

1Cor. 7:12 But to the rest speak I, not the Lord: If any brother hath a wife that believeth not, and she be pleased to dwell with him, let him not put her away. 1Cor. 7:13 And the woman which hath an husband that believeth not, and if he be pleased to dwell with her, let her not leave him.

Again, Paul makes a distinction concerning his instructions vs. God's instructions. Again, I do not believe the Holy Spirit would have inspired these words unless they reflected God's heart.

This instruction is directed to the man or woman whose spouse is an unbeliever. Christians are not to be unequally yoked, but often a person comes to know the Lord after marriage resulting in an unequal yoke. This presented a legitimate concern to those in the church at Corinth.

If the unbelieving spouse is willing to continue the marriage relationship, the believing spouse should remain in relationship with the unbelieving spouse.

Note: Matthew allows one exception to this instruction—in the case of fornication.

Matt. 5:32 But I say unto you, That whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery: and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced committeth adultery.

This teaching is part of the Sermon on the Mount as spoken by Jesus. This instruction is directed specifically to the husband. There is no indication from the Lord that the wife has an option. This instruction is repeated in Matthew 19:9 and again gives no option to the wife. In doing several word searches, I can find no teaching that authorizes the woman to seek divorce. The only instruction I find is referencing adultery in connection to relationship with a woman who has left her husband. As I have thought about this, scripture is clear that the man is the one to whom God has given authority in the home. The woman is to be submissive to the man's authority as delegated by God.

1Cor. 7:14 For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband: else were your children unclean; but now are they holy.

This verse is hard. The word for "sanctified" means to make holy, purify, consecrate. I looked in Webster's for help and came across a definition for

“sanctified” that states “to give sanction to.” *Sanction* implies approval and support. I liked that thought. God desires that the marriage bond not be broken. He approves the existing relationship, though unequally yoked, and will give support to the believing spouse, I believe, through the ministry of the Holy Spirit to bring the unbelieving spouse to salvation.

The last half of the verse is even harder. The Greek for “unclean” states “impure” and includes *demonic*. Obviously, not all children of unbelieving parents are demon-possessed, but they are greatly unprotected and vulnerable to the attack and possession of demons because there is no spiritual protection in the form of prayer and godly example and teaching. The presence of the Holy Spirit in a home in the life of even one believer in that home provides a deterrent to the attack of the enemy and creates a greater possibility for others in that family to respond to the wooing of the Holy Spirit in their own lives. This leads directly into Paul’s thoughts in verse 16.

1Cor. 7:15 But if the unbelieving depart, let him depart. A brother or a sister is not under bondage in such cases: but God hath called us to peace.

If an unbeliever chooses to leave the marriage relationship because the spouse has become a believer, the believing spouse is to let him/her go. God does not desire His children to be subjected to the misery that would accompany an unequally yoked marriage with an unbelieving spouse that wants no part of it. In marriage two people become one flesh; they are a unit. If the unbelieving spouse chooses to leave, that unit is broken. The believing spouse is not held responsible in the eyes of God at that point.

1Cor. 7:16 For what knowest thou, O wife, whether thou shalt save *thy* husband? or how knowest thou, O man, whether thou shalt save *thy* wife?

Obviously, the believing wife or husband cannot “save” their unbelieving spouse. However, they might, by their example, be able to bring the unbeliever to a point of desire for salvation, a point of seeing their need for a Savior. Peter expresses this same thought.

1Pet. 3:1 Likewise, ye wives, *be* in subjection to your own husbands; that, if any obey not the word, they also may without the word be won by the conversation of the wives....

1Cor. 7:17 But as God hath distributed to every man, as the Lord hath called every one, so let him walk. And so ordain I in all churches.

“but” = if not:—but, except (that), if not, more than, save (only) that, saving, til
Webster = On the contrary; on the other hand; only; yet; still; however;
nevertheless; more; further

After thinking about this a while and looking at the definitions, I could go a couple of ways.

- If not – If the unbelieving spouse referenced in the preceding verse, does not become a believer,

- However or Nevertheless – No matter what decision is made concerning the status of marriage—whether you are married, single, widowed, divorced or separated, “as God hath...called every one” – Every believer should live according to God’s direction and calling. I think the NRSV (New Revised Standard Version) phrased it best.

However that may be, let each of you lead the life that the Lord has assigned, to which God called you. This is my rule in all the churches. This is not saying that you are to continue in the state in which you find yourself when you become a Christian, but that you should live according to God’s revealed purposes for your life in submission and obedience to Him from that moment on.

“so ordain I in all churches” - This is not a directive or instruction that is specific to the church at Corinth. This is a general principle of Christian living.

1Cor. 7:18 Is any man called being circumcised? let him not become uncircumcised. Is any called in uncircumcision? let him not be circumcised. 1Cor. 7:19 Circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing, but the keeping of the commandments of God.

Paul now widens the scope of application. Becoming a Christian doesn’t necessitate that one disavow his position as a Jew or that a Gentile should become circumcised and try to follow Jewish law. The significant purpose in the life of the believer, whether Jew or Gentile, is to live according to the commandments/precepts of God.

The question becomes, “What commandments?” Jesus answered this question.

Matt. 22:37 Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.

Matt. 22:38 This is the first and great commandment.

Matt. 22:39 And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.

Matt. 22:40 **On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.**

The key seems to be “love”—both of God and of your neighbor (which you cannot truly love without loving God). The word *love* includes not only affection, but “embracing especially the judgment and the deliberate assent of the will as a matter of principle, duty and propriety (from the Greek).” In other words, it is a matter of the will. Towards God that love includes a recognition of Who He is and His authority over us. I believe this is what is being referenced when scripture admonishes us to *fear* the Lord.

Paul expressed it a little bit differently to the Galatians.

Gal. 5:6 For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision; but faith which worketh by love.

Faith works through loving God as defined above. It is a confidence that He will do all that He has promised according to His word and living life in an attitude of love toward Him that produces obedience.

1Cor. 7:20 Let every man abide in the same calling wherein he was called.

God is not looking at the differences that exist in those that become part of the body of faith; He is looking for unity of spirit in faith and love toward Him. He doesn't care if one is Jew or Gentile, rich or poor, man or woman, married or single, educated or uneducated, etc.

Notice the use of the word *calling* in this verse as well as *called* in verse 17; the word in verse 20 is a shortened version of the word in verse 17. It is a reference to the position to which God has placed upon your heart or invited you (from the Greek), to serve Him—whether married or unmarried, servant or freeman. You may be unmarried when you become a Christian, but that doesn't mean that God intends for you to stay unmarried. He may yet call you to serve Him with a married partner. If you are married when you become a Christian, scripture makes it clear that God's desire is for you to continue to serve Him as a married person (in spite of the allowances made in the situations discussed at the first of the chapter).

1Cor. 7:21 Art thou called *being* a servant? care not for it: but if thou mayest be made free, use *it* rather.

Paul continues to broaden the scope of our thinking. If you became a Christian in the position of servant, use it as an opportunity to serve in love as unto the Lord. You are to be submissive to your master, as unto the Lord. Paul words this thought beautifully in his letter to the Ephesians.

Eph. 6:5 Servants, be obedient to them that are *your* masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, as unto Christ;

Eph. 6:6 Not with eyeservice, as menpleasers; but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart;

Eph. 6:7 With good will doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men:

Eph. 6:8 Knowing that whatsoever good thing any man doeth, the same shall he receive of the Lord, whether *he be* bond or free.

God can use the life of a slave to His glory just as surely as the life of a man who is free to make his own choices.

On the other hand, if the opportunity arises for you to become a free man, take it with the intent of serving God submissively and obediently as one with freedom of choice.

The book of Philemon is a wonderful illustration from real life of properly following this principle. Paul sent new believer Onesimus back to his master. It was the prerogative of the master to allow Onesimus to serve with Paul or not. Onesimus was blessed to have a master that was a Christian, but Paul would have sent him home even had his master not been saved, I believe, based on the principles taught in this chapter of Corinthians and the letter to the Ephesians quoted above. Peter also supports this understanding.

1Pet. 2:18 Servants, *be* subject to *your* masters with all fear; not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward.

“forward” = warped, perverse, crooked

1Cor. 7:22 For he that is called in the Lord, *being* a servant, is the Lord's freeman: likewise also he that is called, *being* free, is Christ's servant.

This is one of the paradoxes pertaining to the Christian life. A believer who is in the position of a servant/slave is "free" in the Lord. A believer who has individual freedom on earth is Christ's servant. Paul discusses this issue at length in his letter to the Romans. Once a person accepts Jesus as his Savior, he/she is released from the bondage of sin. That freedom allows you to obey God willingly in gratitude for that freedom. By choosing to obey God and accept Him as your Lord, you are freely choosing to be His servant because you realize that is a privilege and not a burden.

Rom. 6:6 Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with *him*, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin.

Rom. 6:7 For he that is dead is freed from sin.

Rom. 6:8 Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him:

Rom. 6:9 Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him.

Rom. 6:18 Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness.

Rom. 6:19 I speak after the manner of men because of the infirmity of your flesh: for as ye have yielded your members servants to uncleanness and to iniquity unto iniquity; even so now yield your members servants to righteousness unto holiness.

Rom. 6:20 For when ye were the servants of sin, ye were free from righteousness.

Rom. 6:21 What fruit had ye then in those things whereof ye are now ashamed? for the end of those things *is* death.

Rom. 6:22 But now **being made free from sin, and become servants to God**, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life.

1Cor. 7:23 Ye are bought with a price; be not ye the servants of men.

"Ye are bought with a price" – What price? The precious blood of Jesus.

1Pet. 1:18 Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, *as* silver and gold, from your vain conversation *received* by tradition from your fathers;

1Pet. 1:19 But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot:

Because our position in the family of God is made possible through the great sacrifice of Jesus, the believer owes service to no man. The service we give to man is through the revealed will and for the divine purposes of God. He established earthly authorities; therefore, we are to obey them as unto Him. Again, Peter gives support to this teaching.

1Pet. 2:13 Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake: whether it be to the king, as supreme;

1Pet. 2:14 Or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers, and for the praise of them that do well.

1Pet. 2:15 For so is the will of God, that with well doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men:

1Pet. 2:16 As free, and not using *your* liberty for a cloke of maliciousness, but as the servants of God.

1Cor. 7:24 Brethren, let every man, wherein he is called, therein abide with God.

“Brethren” = fellow believers

This is a restatement of verse 20. The summation at that point was in reference to being married or single or Jew or Gentile; the summation at this point is in reference to being a slave or a free man. The key truth being that we should be content to serve in whatever life circumstances according to God’s revealed will/purposes for his/her life. If you are a servant and have no possibility of gaining freedom, be content and serve God in that position. If you can gain your freedom, by all means do so; but with that newfound freedom, serve God. If you are privileged to be single with the opportunity to serve the Lord with single focus, be content. If the Lord brings another believer into your life with whom you feel you can better serve Him as a married couple, do so. If you are married, God’s desire is that you remain married and serve Him (with exception as stated in previous verses). Paul will go on to elaborate on these thoughts in the next section.

1Cor. 7:25 Now concerning virgins I have no commandment of the Lord: yet I give my judgment, as one that hath obtained mercy of the Lord to be faithful.

The first thing that jumps out to me in this verse is Paul’s carefulness to identify what part of the message is his wisdom vs. what is God’s revelation. He doesn’t hesitate to give his thoughts because the Lord has so mercifully empowered him in his singleness. These thoughts do not constitute a command of God, but advice from a man of spiritual maturity. We know that they must constitute the approval of God since they were inspired by the Holy Spirit to be included in this part of scripture.

Because of the content of the following verses, it would seem that Paul is referencing all who have never been married, even though the Greek word is specific to “maiden, unmarried daughter.”

1Cor. 7:26 I suppose therefore that this is good for the present distress, I say, that *it is* good for a man so to be.

Paul’s advice to these unmarried people is that they remain unmarried because of the “present distress.” What is the “present distress?” At the beginning of chapter 5 Paul identified *fornication* as a specific problem in this body of believers. This particular sin had evidently become acceptable to the point that even a son who had taken his father’s wife had not been disciplined by the church.

I am a little confused at the assumption of most of the commentaries to equate this *present distress* to persecution of the church. From the beginning of this letter Paul is addressing problems within the church—not problems coming from without. It does make it easier to explain why Paul would recommend

singleness as a better state of being in that your family can't be used to pressure you to give in to "what everyone else is doing" or used against you by threatening to harm them if you don't cooperate with ungodly demands.

I personally believe that Paul is saying that by staying single you place yourself in better position to submit to God in love and obedience without distraction.

1Cor. 7:27 Art thou bound unto a wife? seek not to be loosed. Art thou loosed from a wife? seek not a wife.

As for those who are married, Paul is confirming that it is God's will that your marriage not be dissolved. This truth is affirmed by the very words of Jesus.

Matt. 19:4 And he answered and said unto them, Have ye not read, that he which made *them* at the beginning made them male and female,

Matt. 19:5 And said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh?

Matt. 19:6 Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.

This matter of marriage and divorce was discussed thoroughly in verses 10-16 above.

1Cor. 7:28 But and if thou marry, thou hast not sinned; and if a virgin marry, she hath not sinned. Nevertheless such shall have trouble in the flesh: but I spare you.

Based on the context of the whole chapter, I think one can safely assume that Paul is saying that it is not a sin for those who are scripturally free to marry to do so. Those who do marry, however, can expect to experience the responsibilities, trials and tribulations that necessarily accompany marriage. Paul is not going to make a list of these *troubles*.

1Cor. 7:29 But this I say, brethren, the time *is* short: it remaineth, that both they that have wives be as though they had none;

1Cor. 7:30 And they that weep, as though they wept not; and they that rejoice, as though they rejoiced not; and they that buy, as though they possessed not;

1Cor. 7:31 And they that use this world, as not abusing *it*: for the fashion of this world passeth away.

In reading the different translations, I really believe the NLT captured the intent of Paul's words the best.

1Cor. 7:29 ¶ Now let me say this, dear brothers and sisters: The time that remains is very short, so husbands should not let marriage be their major concern.

1Cor. 7:30 Happiness or sadness or wealth should not keep anyone from doing God's work.

1Cor. 7:31 Those in frequent contact with the things of the world should make good use of them without becoming attached to them, for this world and all it contains will pass away.

Basically, the main focus of our lives should be God/Jesus. When God is given the preeminence in our lives, everything else falls into proper perspective. Even the spouse that we so cherish is only ours in marriage for a season. In eternity

we will neither “marry nor are given in marriage.” (Matthew 12:30, Mark 12:25, Luke 20:35)

Paul reminds us that our time is short (whether we live to die a natural death or until the Lord comes). The things that cause us tears should not consume us. The things that bring us happiness should not consume us. Our possessions should not be the focal point of our lives. This sin-cursed world and everything associated with it is going to pass away. Only what’s done for Christ will last.

Matt. 6:19 Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal:

Matt. 6:20 But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal.

1Cor. 7:32 But I would have you without carefulness. He that is unmarried careth for the things that belong to the Lord, how he may please the Lord:

1Cor. 7:33 But he that is married careth for the things that are of the world, how he may please *his* wife.

I think the NLT states it the best.

In everything you do, I want you to be free from the concerns of this life.

An unmarried man can spend his time doing the Lord’s work and thinking how to please him. But a married man can’t do that so well. He has to think about his earthly responsibilities and how to please his wife.

The Greek for *carefulness* added the idea of being *secure* which Webster defines as “easy in mind, confident in mind, not having reason to doubt.” When you are involved in ministry of any kind as a married person, whether in the church or some other sphere of activity, you have to learn to find balance in your responsibilities. Sometimes you might not be confident that you are finding that balance, and your mind can become uneasy that you are not fulfilling one role or another according to God’s will and with His priorities. This doubt or lack of balance can lead to unnecessary stress.

1Cor. 7:34 There is difference *also* between a wife and a virgin. The unmarried woman careth for the things of the Lord, that she may be holy both in body and in spirit: but she that is married careth for the things of the world, how she may please *her* husband.

The same principle applies to unmarried and married women. As a wife and a mom, I am aware of my responsibilities regarding those relationships before the Lord. There have been many times that I have felt my “earthly responsibilities” as wife and mom have inhibited my ability to serve God as I so desired. There have also been times that I have tried to spread myself too thin in trying to meet people’s expectations. I can especially remember times as a Sunday School teacher or Children’s Choir Director when I didn’t put enough preparation time into those responsibilities and was content to “wing it.” Other people might not have been aware of the facts because the outcome was never bad, but I knew I could have done much better—and more importantly, God knew. He doesn’t want us to serve Him with half a heart—He wants our whole heart.

1Cor. 7:35 And this I speak for your own profit; not that I may cast a snare upon you, but for that which is comely, and that ye may attend upon the Lord without distraction.

Paul reminds the Corinthians that he wants the best for them. He is giving them the best advice possible regarding how to be able to serve the Lord with your whole heart without distraction. It isn't Paul's intention to cause the believers trouble by making them feel trapped by restrictions. He is just making sure they can make the best decisions by being aware of all the facts.

1Cor. 7:36 But if any man think that he behaveth himself uncomely toward his virgin, if she pass the flower of *her* age, and need so require, let him do what he will, he sinneth not: let them marry.

The KJV wording is very confusing; the NLT is much clearer.

But if a man thinks he ought to marry his fiancée because he has trouble controlling his passions and time is passing, it is all right; it is not a sin. Let them marry.

1Cor. 7:37 Nevertheless he that standeth stedfast in his heart, having no necessity, but hath power over his own will, and hath so decreed in his heart that he will keep his virgin, doeth well.

Again, the NLT seems to state it best.

But if he has decided firmly not to marry and there is no urgency and he can control his passion, he does well not to marry.

Most of the translations continue to make a reference to the fiancée with the phrase "his virgin." I don't think that makes sense. In verse 36 the reference to "his virgin" as his fiancée is clarified by the reference to her passing the flower of her age (losing the bloom of youth). In this verse the whole context is regarding the man's mastery over his own will and the ability to be content as a single man. It is not saying that the girl should remain forever a fiancée.

1Cor. 7:38 So then he that giveth *her* in marriage doeth well; but he that giveth *her* not in marriage doeth better.

Because of the culture's emphasis on the authority of men, Paul has directed the majority of his advice to the men, but I believe the NLT again gets the heart of the message right.

So the person who marries does well, and the person who doesn't marry does even better.

1Cor. 7:39 The wife is bound by the law as long as her husband liveth; but if her husband be dead, she is at liberty to be married to whom she will; only in the Lord.

1Cor. 7:40 But she is happier if she so abide, after my judgment: and I think also that I have the Spirit of God.

In these verses Paul addresses the woman and her will (which I think clarifies the heart of the message of the previous verse). The specific difference is that he is addressing a woman who has been widowed. She is then scripturally free to marry again "in the Lord." But—Paul's opinion is that she will be happier if she remains single. As he gives this advice, he believes that his advice is in agreement with the Holy Spirit.