

Title: Conflict of Interest
Scripture - 1 Cor 7:32-35

- I. Unmarried
 - a. Free From Concern
 - i. Free- free from care, unworried; *being unduly concerned*,
 - ii. Concern- **to attend to, care for, be concerned about** τὶ *someth.* τὰ τοῦ κυρίου *the Lord's* intentness on something," "striving after something"work
 - 1. *striving* for that which may lie beyond one's grasp; cf. Ps 54:22; Prov 27:12;
 - b. Man
 - i. Concerned about the Things of the Lord
 - 1. Concerned – devotes; **to attend to, care for, be concerned about** τὶ *someth.* τὰ τοῦ κυρίου *the Lord's* intentness on something," "striving after something"work ¹
 - 2. Things of the Lord – Benefit the Lord
 - 3. he situation illustrates Paul's point that the single life with its greater simplicity in obligations allows a potentially greater commitment of time, resources, and self **to the Lord**
 - ii. How to Please the Lord
 - 1. **to give pleasure/satisfaction, please, accommodate.** to express interest in accommodating others by meeting their needs or carrying out important obligations.
 - c. Women
 - i.
 - ii. Holy Body and Spirit
 - 1. Body – Living Body
 - 2. Spirit – The inner life of humans – soul
- II. Married
 - a. Man
 - i. Concerned about the things of the World
 - 1. Concerned - **to attend to, care for, be concerned about** τὶ *someth.* τὰ τοῦ κυρίου *the Lord's* intentness on something," "striving after something"work

someth. someth. = something

someth. someth. = something

¹ William Arndt, Frederick W. Danker, et al., [*A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*](#) (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 632.

someth. someth. = something

2. Things of the World **the system of human existence in its many aspects, the world**
 - a. as scene of earthly joys, possessions, cares, sufferings *gain the whole world* Mt 16:26; Mk 8:36; Lk 9:25;
 - b. **the affairs of the world** 1 Cor 7:33f²
 - ii. How to please His Wife
 - iii. Interest divided
 1. *divided* but **pulled in two directions**
 2. *parceling out* of time, attention, energies, and tasks that means he is **pulled in two directions**.
 - b. Woman
 - i. Concerned about the things of the World
 - ii. How to please her Husband
- III. For your Own Good
- a. Own Benefit- advantage, helpful, profitable
 - b. Not to restrain you- *throwing a lasso over* the heads of animals, which can then be drawn by a slipknot into **a tight rein**
 - i. Paul's motivation and concern are neither purely authoritarian nor largely ascetic, but to maximize the freedom and lack of anxiety experienced by the addressees in the Lord's work.
 - c. Promote what is appropriate- refers to doing everything **properly, decently, appropriately, or in good order**
 - d. Secure undistracted devotion to the Lord
 - i. Undistracted - *that you might adhere faithfully to the Lord without distraction*³
 - ii. Devotion- **being in constant attendance, constantly in service**⁴
 1. This is probably the closest point of affinity in this chapter, with the fundamental difference that (i) Paul speaks of **devotion to the Lord**; and (ii) Christian husband and Christian wife can also encourage and enhance each other's **devotion to the Lord**, even though a balance sheet emerges of "distractions" generated by family responsibilities.

² William Arndt, Frederick W. Danker, et al., [*A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*](#) (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 562.

³ William Arndt et al., [*A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*](#) (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 101.

⁴ William Arndt et al., [*A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*](#) (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 410.

Background

If the world in its present form is passing away, then believers contemplating marriage need to give due consideration to the commitment of marriage in relation to pleasing the Lord and serving him without distraction. Thus, Paul gives yet another reason to those contemplating marriage to remain single, namely, that they may be free from concern and serve the Lord without distraction. Marriage entails many responsibilities equally for husband and wife as each seeks to please the other.³⁵⁹ Such an arrangement inevitably leads to divided interests (7:34). Paul has no desire to restrict them, but he advises them in this way for their own good (7:35; cf. 7:28b). The word translated “good” means “advantageous”³⁶⁰ and is cognate to the verb translated “beneficial”³⁶¹ in the slogan of 6:12, “Not everything is beneficial” (cf. also 10:23).

³⁵⁹ Barrett (*First Corinthians*, 179) notes that, against the traditional reading 7:32 might mean, “The unmarried is anxious about the things of the Lord” in the sense of seeking to please the Lord through meritorious works. This interpretation assumes that there is a pro-celibacy party in Corinth promoting celibacy as a higher spiritual existence. Paul replies that one should not be anxious to please the Lord in this way.

³⁶⁰ Gk. σύμφορος.

³⁶¹ Gk. συμφέρω.

32 The opening words of this verse indicate that Paul is taking his recommendation that single men and women remain unmarried a step further.³⁸¹ He writes: Now (or but) *I would like you to be free from concern*. The argument moves from the mundane and practical in vv. 25–28 (“the present crisis” and “troubles in this life”) and the eschatological in vv. 29–31 (“the time is short”; “this world in its present form is passing away”) to the christological in vv. 32–35. This third point makes explicit what underlies the first two, namely, that Paul wants the Corinthians to live lives of undistracted devotion to the Lord.

Word Studies

Free- *free from care* without worry, unworried, free from concern⁵

Concern – **to attend to, care for, be concerned about** τὴ *someh*. τὰ τοῦ κυρίου *the Lord's* intentness on something,” “striving after something” work ⁶

Things of the Lord- σύμφορον *benefit*

Please the Lord –**to give pleasure/satisfaction, please, accommodate.**

- Ⓐ a favored term in the reciprocity-conscious Mediterranean world, and frequently used in honorary documents to express interest in accommodating others by meeting their needs or carrying out important obligations. ⁷

Things of the World -**the system of human existence in its many aspects, the world**

- Ⓐ as scene of earthly joys, possessions, cares, sufferings

³⁸¹ Wimbush, *Paul the Worldly Ascetic*, 49, notes the adversative or transitional force of δέ following the verb “to wish” and the second-person plural pronoun “you” (ὕμᾱς), which does not appear in vv. 29–31. Taken together these mark “a significant turn.”

⁵ Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, [*Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains*](#) (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996), 312.
someh. someth. = something

⁶ William Arndt, Frederick W. Danker, et al., [*A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*](#) (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 632.

⁷ William Arndt, Frederick W. Danker, et al., [*A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*](#) (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 129.

gain the whole world Mt 16:26; Mk 8:36; Lk 9:25;

- τὰ τοῦ κόσμου **the affairs of the world** 1 Cor 7:33f⁸

Please his Wife –

His interest

Divided –to separate into parts, *divide*⁹

The virgin –

Holy body and Spirit

Body – living body

Spirit - The inner life of humans is divided into ψυχὴ καὶ πνεῦμα (cp. Ps.-Pla., Axioch. 10 p. 370c τὸ θεῖον ὄντως ἐνῆν πνεῦμα τῆ ψυχῆ=a divine spirit was actually in the soul¹⁰

Please her husband.

Undistracted devotion to the Lord-

⁸ William Arndt, Frederick W. Danker, et al., [*A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*](#) (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 562.

⁹ William Arndt, Frederick W. Danker, et al., [*A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*](#) (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 631.

cp. **cp.** = compare, freq. in ref. to citation fr. ancient texts

Ps. **Ps.** = pseudo, pseudonymous

Pla **Pla** , V–IV B.C.; s. also Ps.-Plato—List 5

¹⁰ William Arndt et al., [*A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*](#) (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 833.

Commentary Studies

32–33 Now signals the shift of emphasis which Wimbush identifies, noting the slightly adversative and transitional force of δέ after θέλω and the second person plural ὑμᾶς, which is absent in effect from vv. 29–31a.⁵⁴³ The keyword is ἀμερίμνους, **free from anxieties**. The alpha-privative negates the adjectival form of the noun μέριμνα, *anxiety, care*, the cognate verb of which is μεριμνάω, used in the dual sense of (i) **being anxious, being unduly concerned**, and (ii) *being properly concerned for, devoting concern to*. Thus the third singular present indicative active of the contracted verb μεριμνᾷ probably plays on the double nuance of **devoting his concern** (v. 32) and *worrying about, or having anxieties about* (v. 33).⁵⁴⁴ The alpha-privative adjective ἀμερίμνος is rare in the NT, but occurs in Seneca as an attribute of celibacy which offers care-free concentration in contemplative philosophy. Collins alludes to parallels in Cynic philosophy.⁵⁴⁵ Thus the use of the word group functions against two distinct backgrounds of discourse. It is prevalent in Stoicism as a quality which results from indifference to contingent events; it occurs in the teaching of Jesus as a manifestation of the single-mindedness which trust in God brings about (Matt 6:25, 28; par. Luke 12:22, 26; Matt 10:19). Paul uses the word elsewhere both in the sense of a prohibition against *anxiety* in the light of the peace of God (Phil 4:6) and in the sense of encouraging *concern* for other people (Phil 2:20). Jesus also refers to the *worry or worries of the present world-order* (τοῦ αἰῶνος, Matt 13:22; Mark 4:19).⁵⁴⁶

⁵⁴³ Wimbush, *Paul, the Worldly Ascetic*, 49, notes these aspects of syntax as “the sign of a shift ... in emphasis ... a significant turn....”

⁵⁴⁴ Cf. the entries in BAGD, 504–5, and Moulton-Geden. Deming also perceives word-play (*Paul on Marriage*, 203).

⁵⁴⁵ Seneca speaks of a mind “beyond reach of fear” (*De Vita Beata* 4.3; cf. 4.2). Cf. Collins, *First Cor*, 291. However, the basis, ground, and motivation for Christian believers remains distinctive (see below).

⁵⁴⁶ In Mark 4:19 the parable of the sower includes the picture of how the cares or anxieties of the everyday life of this world’s commercial and civic structures “choke” the word of God.

A further tradition emerges from the LXX, where the theme of *anxiety* seems to include the added component of **striving for that which may lie beyond one's grasp**; cf. Ps 54:22; Prov 27:12; Sir 30:24; 38:29; Wis 12:22; 2 Macc 6:10. Deming also claims that the motif of freedom from distraction specifically for a unified concern owes even more to Cynic discourse than to Stoicism. The main Cynic term ἀπεριστάτως, *without distraction*, appears in v. 35. But he concedes that this adverbial form is rare at this date, and that it occurs in Epictetus and Marcus Aurelius among the Stoics.⁵⁴⁷ But as we noted in the context of v. 31, we need to guard against overhasty inferences from terminological parallels. *Trust in God relativizes* all other concerns; it does not “detach” the Christian believer from them. The universe of discourse is different, and we should avoid what Moores, following Eco, calls the “code switching” which would generate confused or even fused meaning.⁵⁴⁸

We cannot translate ὁ ἄγαμος μεριμνᾷ τὰ τοῦ κυρίου as *the unmarried man is anxious about the things of the Lord*, since Paul wants all of his readers (θέλω δὲ ὑμᾶς) to be anxiety-free. Barrett constructively points out that since Paul elsewhere assures the churches that God loves them whatever occurs (Rom 5:1; 8:38–39) the word could mean *anxious* only if it is a consciously allusive polemic against “anxiety to win God’s favor by pleasing him.”⁵⁴⁹ Perhaps those who advocated ascetic practices at Corinth had become obsessive about the supposed need to win God’s favor by going beyond ordinary requirements. In the end Barrett concludes that Paul advocates the kind of “good anxiety” which casts out “bad anxiety.” But in this case, with Deming we should plausibly interpret Paul as drawing on an established double meaning of μεριμνάω; here, **the unmarried man devotes his concern to the things of the Lord**; in v. 33 μεριμνάω denotes **being anxious**.

The common thread which unites the two aspects becomes apparent in the deliberative subjunctive πῶς ἀρέσῃ τῷ κυρίῳ, best marked by translating **how he is to please the Lord**. A to-and-fro deliberation is implied, but a trustful, not anxious deliberation, which is part of Christian maturity. NRSV and RSV simply translate *how to please ...*, but several VSS rephrase the clause, e.g., *his aim is to please the Lord* (REB); cf. *how he can please the Lord* (NJB). The construction functions, in effect, as an indirect question.⁵⁵⁰

The articular aorist participle ὁ δὲ γαμήσας draws attention to entering into the change of situation. Robertson and Plummer suggest: *once a man is married*.⁵⁵¹ **The man who has married** (as against *married man*, REB, NRSV, NIV; or *is married*, NJB) seems a less distracting compromise. Here Fee understands μεριμνᾷ in a positive sense: *he cares for the things of the world, how to please his wife*.⁵⁵² He “cares for” both the Lord and his wife. But the very objection which Fee makes to the interpretation of a double meaning (cf. above) for μεριμνάω as making the word

⁵⁴⁷ Epictetus *Dissertations* 1.29.58–59; Marcus Aurelius, 3.6. Cf. Polybius, 2.20.10, and Deming, *Paul on Marriage*, 199–200.

⁵⁴⁸ Cf. Moores, *Wrestling with Rationality in Paul*, 5–33, 132–60.

⁵⁴⁹ Barrett, *First Epistle*, 179.

⁵⁵⁰ Fee picks up the construction well: “a deliberative subjunctive.... It would say, ‘How might I please the Lord?’” (*First Epistle*, 343, n. 32); although “how am I to please the Lord?” might be even better.

⁵⁵¹ Robertson and Plummer, *First Epistle*, 157; cf. Wolff, *Der erste Brief*, 159.

⁵⁵² Fee, *First Epistle*, 344.

“mean two different things” applies equally here, except that the difference of meaning has now shifted from the contrast between v. 32b and v. 33 to a parallel contrast between v. 32a and v. 33. In any case, as we shall see (below on v. 34), μεμέρισται means not simply **divided but pulled in two directions** (REB).⁵⁵³

In his detailed study *Paul and Seneca* J. N. Sevenster repeatedly warns readers “not ... to be misled by superficial verbal parallels.”⁵⁵⁴ Whereas Jesus and Paul advocate freedom from anxiety and preoccupation with the self by placing everything in God’s hands, in trust, Seneca argues that it is folly to look to God for “what you can acquire from yourself.”⁵⁵⁵ Lack of anxiety for Seneca becomes a matter of accepting fate: “in noble virtue the willing soul Fate leads; but the unwilling fate drags along.”⁵⁵⁶ Paul invites, rather, responsible deliberation in trust: how is one to please the Lord? Marriage may be a factor in the situation, but, as 7:28 confirms (“if you do marry, you are not doing anything wrong,” REB), marriage is no decisive obstacle to “pleasing the Lord” and is certainly not merely accepted with Stoic resignation or as a Cynic accommodation to special circumstances which take priority over such “distraction.”⁵⁵⁷ Throughout this section, in spite of Fee’s reservations about interpreting μεριμνάω in a double sense (as both positive *concern* and negative *worry*) Moffatt convincingly comments, “Paul plays on the double sense of *anxious* ... right concern.”⁵⁵⁸ This point is developed in the next verse.

34 This verse yields one of the most widely known textual problems in the Pauline epistles. Orr and Walther observe that nine variant readings can be traced.⁵⁵⁹ The UBS 4th ed. *Greek New Testament* follows the reading which we have translated (in common with the Nestlé text) but ranks it in the “D” category, which the Committee tries to avoid, namely, where they had “great difficulty in arriving at a decision.” The UBS 3rd ed. had also ranked it “D,” in this case to signify “a very high degree of doubt.” The main issue of substance is whether the verb μεμέρισται, translated as the first sentence above, should be construed (as here) as referring to the subject of the previous verse, or whether it points forward to what follows, to yield some such meaning as *There is a difference between the married woman and the unmarried*. Many of the nine variants are slips or rationalizations which may be resolved into a smaller number of major variants.⁵⁶⁰

⁵⁵³ Cf. Schrage, *Der erste Brief*, 2:178–80.

⁵⁵⁴ Sevenster, *Paul and Seneca*, 82.

⁵⁵⁵ Seneca, *Epistles* 41.1; cf. 95.50; and Sevenster, *Paul and Seneca*, 46.

⁵⁵⁶ Seneca, *Epistles* 107.10-12.

⁵⁵⁷ Epictetus, *Diss.* 3.22.69; cf. D. S. Sharp, *Epictetus and the NT* (London: Kelly, 1914), 49–50; A. Bonhöffer, *Epiktet und das NT* (Giessen: Töpelmann, 1911), 35–38, 108, 330, and 382–90.

⁵⁵⁸ Moffatt, *First Epistle*, 94; cf. Fee, *First Epistle*, 343–45, and Schrage, *Der erste Brief*, 2:178–80.

⁵⁵⁹ Orr and Walther, *1 Cor*, 219.

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⁵⁶⁰ Metzger, *Textual Commentary* (2d ed. 1994), 490; on the 3d UBS ed. cf. his 1st ed., 555–56.

(1) Thus the very early \mathfrak{P}^{46} (c. AD 200) attaches ἡ ἄγαμος to ἡ παρθένος, in a situation which Metzger regards as one of typical scribal conflation. But he accepts that the UBS 4th ed. reading has the support of \mathfrak{P}^{46} (c. 200), \mathfrak{P}^{15} (third century), and B (fourth century) with some minuscules, Vulgate (*et divisus est*), Coptic VSS (from third century), and Eusebius, i.e., both early Alexandrian and Western support. (2) The second καί is omitted by D*, and ἡ ἄγαμος is transposed from ἡ γυνή to ἡ παρθένος. Thus the Western tradition D, E, F, G, K, L, some Old Latin MSS, Tertullian, and certain Vulgate MSS read, *There is a difference between the married woman and the woman who has not married.* (3) A third group does not transpose ἡ ἄγαμος, leaving it to qualify ἡ γυνή, while at the time omitting the first καί. It thus connects μεμέρισται with what follows, and yields some such meaning as *The woman is also divided. However...* This reading is supported by \aleph , A, and 33.

Summary: Most translations and writers accept (1). Thus the (1) (UBS 4th ed.) reading is adopted by NRSV, REB, ASV, NIV, NJB, Barrett, Moffatt, Collins, and Luther. (2) The AV/KJV and RV, together with J. B. Phillips, follow the reading of D, E, F, and G: *There is a difference also between a (AV)/the (RV)/wife and a/the virgin.* (3) The third possibility does not seem to find favor among major translations.

The main objections to construing μεμέρισται with what follows arise from the singular of the verb, and the contention that the passive of μερίζω would not mean “there is a difference.”⁵⁶¹ Meyer argues that “μερίζεσθαι is used ... to denote division into different tendencies, views, party-positions ...”; and “is in the *singular* because it stands at the head of the sentence.”⁵⁶² Lietzmann urges that it was the very perception of a lack of parallelism which led to the alteration from the authentic reading in B to the secondary gloss in D and Latin traditions.⁵⁶³ This, in turn, led to various forms of mixed text in \aleph , A, and other MSS. Godet, Meyer, Lightfoot, and Robertson and Plummer follow not only Tertullian and Ambrose but also Chrysostom, Theodoret, and Luther. But today the majority follow the first view.⁵⁶⁴ The older writers did not have access to \mathfrak{P}^{46} , and other details are discussed further by Schrage (*loc. cit.*).

The one remaining problem is easily clarified. Whichever of the two main readings we adopt, the earliest MSS appear to include an unnecessary second ἄγαμος. While the reading is possible, the word may in the first instance have been omitted by a scribe who then placed the omission either in the margin or crammed it above the line. Subsequent scribes then inserted the word at

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⁵⁶¹ Héring, *First Epistle*, 61.

⁵⁶² Meyer, *First Epistle*, 1:225–26; cf. Godet, *First Epistle*, 1:382–83.

⁵⁶³ Lietzmann, *An die Korinther*, 34–35, where Tertullian and Ambrose are compared with Clement and Origen.

⁵⁶⁴ Weiss, *Der erste Korintherbrief*, 202–3; Bachmann, *Der erste Brief*, 280–84; Héring, *First Epistle*, 61; Conzelmann, *1 Cor*, 134, n. 1; Barrett, *First Epistle*, 180; Fee, *First Epistle*, 335, nn. 3 and 5; Collins, *First Cor*, 296; Schrage, *Der erste Brief*, 2:178–79, n. 721.

different places.⁵⁶⁵ Metzger attributes the problem to the difficulty of distinguishing the various categories within the verse.⁵⁶⁶

The REB translation is adopted here: **And he is pulled in two directions** (cf. Collins and Moffatt, *he is torn*). In 1:13 Paul used μεμέρισται ὁ Χριστός; to mean not simply, *is Christ divided?* but, *has Christ been apportioned out?* μερίζω is both *to divide into component parts* and *to distribute, deal out, apportion, assign*.⁵⁶⁷ The married man finds himself *apportioned* to both his wife and to the Lord; and it is this **parceling out of time, attention, energies, and tasks that means he is pulled in two directions**. This solves the problem which Fee tries to resolve by unnecessarily complex arguments about the positive and negative force of μεριμνάω.⁵⁶⁸ It is simply a lexicographical fact that the word is used in both senses, and **to be pulled in two directions** is so different from *being anxious* that the meaning of μεμέρισται should not govern our interpretation of μεριμνάω.

The distinction between ἡ γυνὴ ἄγαμος and ἡ παρθένος has been much discussed. But the difference seems to be fairly clear. The former term denotes (usually) a woman who has been married but is now either widowed, divorced, or in a state of permanent separation. Since the latter subcategory is included, we need not be surprised that Paul does not choose to use χῆρα, even if *widows* represent the majority of those included under the broader term. Moreover, in the case of slaves (who would certainly be among members of the church), the wider term would include women who were neither formally married nor virgins (see above on slaves and slavery).⁵⁶⁹ We have thus translated the first term **the woman who is currently free of wedlock**. By contrast, ἡ παρθένος raises little difficulty. Strictly the word with the feminine definite article means *women who are virgins*, but generally means *young woman* in this category (i.e., usually between twelve and sixteen). But again the term need not always be limited to the younger age group. Hence we signal the contrast in modern English by (a) **the woman who is currently free of wedlock** and (b) **the woman who has never married**. See “Controversy about Divorce and Remarriage for Christians” (after 7:16), where C. Brown and others address this question in an urgent context for today.

The one complication is the singular verb (unless we add a second complication interpreting παρθένος as *virgin daughters* in v. 38). REB, NIV, and Knox neatly solve the problem by substituting *or for and* as the translation of καί, which allows both for a singular and for the possibility that the second term is merely explanatory in relation to the first.⁵⁷⁰ But NRSV, ASV, and NJB retain **and**. The singular is readily explained, however, as a *sense construction for the single collective category*, whether or not it technically constitutes a minor grammatical slip.

⁵⁶⁵ Lightfoot, *Notes*, 233.

⁵⁶⁶ Metzger, *A Textual Commentary* (2d ed.), 490.

⁵⁶⁷ BAGD, 504.

⁵⁶⁸ Fee, *First Epistle*, 343–45.

⁵⁶⁹ Barrett, *First Epistle*, 180; and esp. Wire, *Corinthian Women Prophets*, 91; cf. 90–93.

⁵⁷⁰ Ronald Knox translates **a woman who is free of wedlock, or a virgin ...**, and we have used his phrase in preference to *a woman who is not currently married*. We cannot translate *the woman who is no longer married* because this would exclude the last subcategory, who would without question exist in a slave culture.

An additional phrase is now added which was not applied to the single or widowed man: ἵνα ἦ ἅγια καὶ τῷ σώματι καὶ τῷ πνεύματι. Clearly a lesser involvement with “the things of the world” is correlative with being **holy** both in the OT sense of belonging exclusively to God (e.g., *שְׂדֵדָה*, *qadosh, separate*) and in the sense of devoted attention and service to the Lord. At least two reasons have been suggested for the asymmetrical addition. Moffatt perceives Paul as “vindicating an unmarried Christian woman’s position as honourable ... freeing her from the stigma which was generally attached to spinsters in ancient society.”⁵⁷¹ Barrett holds that the association between **being holy** and bodily celibacy is so uncharacteristic of Paul and in conflict with what he has said about the holiness of the family in 7:14 that the phrase must be understood as embodying a direct quotation from Corinth: “We must conclude, therefore, that in *that she may be holy both in body and in spirit* we have words quoted from the Corinthian ascetical party. Paul approves the sentiment, though he would not himself confine it to the unmarried.”⁵⁷² Wire’s study lends support to this view.⁵⁷³

The contrast in this clause between τῷ σώματι and τῷ πνεύματι may well add weight to Barrett’s suggestion. In spite of Gundry’s claims about Paul’s use of σῶμα, the term on its own can denote human life in its completeness.⁵⁷⁴ As Käsemann urges, for Paul σῶμα *denotes the human person as part of the public world*.⁵⁷⁵ Probably a midway view is the right one, as advocated by Ruef. It was doubtless some of the Corinthians themselves, he argues, who drew a sharp line between *the affairs of the world* and *the affairs of the Lord*, “the kind of distinction which the Corinthians made to their own confusion.”⁵⁷⁶ Ruef alludes to 6:12–13. Hence we must *either* (a) follow Barrett and use quotation marks with a conventional translation, *in order to be “holy both in body and in spirit.” But the woman ...*, or (b) translate the terms in a way which brings together the public world of the whole person as σῶμα with the transcendent realm of the whole person’s intimacy with God as πνεῦμα, or Holy Spirit: **in order to be holy both publicly and in the Spirit**. This parallels the point made earlier about time for prayer in 7:5, and accords with Paul’s most usual and characteristic use of πνεῦμα.

The second half of the antithesis (v. 34c) follows the vocabulary and syntax of v. 33, except for the change from τῇ γυναικί (v. 33) to τῷ ἀνδρὶ (v. 34c), and therefore requires no further comment.

35 For your own help translates the neuter singular adjective σύμφορον with the definite article, which bears the meaning *profitable, advantageous, helpful*, in conjunction with the reflexive plural ὑμῶν αὐτῶν.⁵⁷⁷ The effect of the reflexive construction is to focus attention on the fact that the help or benefit is **entirely their own**; hence the translation makes this explicit.

⁵⁷¹ Moffatt, *First Epistle*, 95.

⁵⁷² Barrett, *First Epistle*, 181.

⁵⁷³ Wire, *Corinthian Women Prophets*, 90–97.

⁵⁷⁴ Gundry, *Sōma in Biblical Theology*, 80.

⁵⁷⁵ E. Käsemann, *NT Questions of Today* (Eng. trans., London: SCM, 1969), 135; cf. also his *Leib und Leib Christi* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1933).

⁵⁷⁶ Ruef, *First Letter*, 66.

⁵⁷⁷ Cf. M. M. Mitchell, *Paul and the Rhetoric of Reconciliation*, esp. 25–39 on τὸ συμφέρον as “advantage” in Paul’s use of deliberative rhetoric in 1 Corinthians.

The phrase βρόχον ὑμῖν ἐπιβαλῶ (second aorist subjunctive) utilizes the image of *throwing a lasso over the heads of animals, which can then be drawn by a slipknot into a tight rein*. Although the papyri contain examples of its being used both for the hangman's noose and for the slipknot of a snare or trap, the phrase occurs within the NT only here, where clearly the established image of the lasso and tight rein is more appropriate to Paul's contextual concern than AV/KJV, *cast a snare upon you*. The literal use of the phrase occurs from Homer through the LXX period to *Oxyrhynchus Papyri* 51:16 for war or for hunting animals, and serves here as a metaphor of firm restraint. Paul's motivation and concern are neither purely authoritarian nor largely ascetic, but to maximize the freedom and lack of anxiety experienced by the addressees in the Lord's work.

The negation of the **tight rein** is amplified by the positive, complementary observation that *on the contrary* (ἀλλά, **but**) it was **with a view to** (πρός with articular accusative) **what is proper**. This last phrase translates εὖσχημον, which means *proper* or *presentable* in 12:24, of parts of the body, and in its cognate adverbial form εὖσχημόνως **refers to doing everything properly, decently, appropriately, or in good order** (14:40). The word is used in this sense in contemporary Cynic and Stoic writers (Epictetus, *Dissertations* 2.5.23; cf. Josephus, *Antiquities* 15.102; Rom 13:13). It further draws its semantic currency from its contrast with the negative verbal form ἀσχημονεῖν in the next verse (v. 36), *to behave without propriety*.

The very rare adjective εὐπάρεδρος receives only three lines in BAGD, who cite only two references: here within the NT and otherwise only in Hesychius who wrote in the fifth century AD. Nevertheless, in semantic terms the word is "transparent" (in contrast to "opaque"), i.e., it is made up of εὖ, *well, in a good manner*, with πάρεδρος, *sitting beside* (cf. *kath-edral*, [bishop's] *seat*). The concept of *taking a good position beside the Lord* remains (together with τὸ εὖσχημον) governed by πρὸς, **with a view to**, and NRSV, RSV, NIV follow BAGD in translating it as **devotion to the Lord** (cf. NJB, *attention to the Lord*).⁵⁷⁸

The adverb ἀπερισπάστως receives much attention from Deming, Wimbush, and Yarbrough on account of its role in discussions of marriage and "worldly" affairs in Stoic-Cynic discourse. The emphasis on **undistracted devotion to** the study of philosophy is central in much Cynic discourse, where reservations about marriage have *nothing to do with asceticism* but *everything to do with being without distraction* (ἀπερισπάστως). Yarbrough writes, "As we have seen, Epictetus did not claim that marriage in itself was wrong. Indeed he argued that it was a civic duty which most men were obliged to perform.... It was only for the Cynic who had taken up a divine mission that it was inappropriate, since he must devote himself ... to the performance of that mission (Epictetus, *Dissertations* 3.22.69).⁵⁷⁹ Yarbrough, Wimbush, and Deming all perceive

BAGD Bauer, Arndt, Gingrich, and Danker, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*

BAGD Bauer, Arndt, Gingrich, and Danker, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*

⁵⁷⁸ BAGD, 324; and Bachmann, *Der erste Brief*, 287.

⁵⁷⁹ Yarbrough, *Not like the Gentiles*, 105. The issue is μή ποτ' περίσπαστον εἶναι δεῖ τὸν κυνικόν, ὄλον πρὸς τῇ διακονίᾳ τοῦ θεοῦ, "whether the Cynic should be *free from distraction*, wholly for the service of the Lord."

a close affinity between Cynic concerns and those of Paul at this point.⁵⁸⁰ This is probably the closest point of affinity in this chapter, with the fundamental difference that (i) Paul speaks of **devotion to the Lord**; and (ii) Christian husband and Christian wife can also encourage and enhance each other's **devotion to the Lord**, even though a balance sheet emerges of "distractions" generated by family responsibilities.

7:32–35. Paul's third reason was a development of the second. The single state has potentially fewer encumbrances and distractions than the married state, so it more easily facilitates a spirit of **undivided devotion to the Lord**. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus warned His followers against letting concern for the material aspects of this life distract them from devotion to God (Matt. 6:25–34). The poor widow (Mark 12:44) gave all her material sustenance to God as an act of singular devotion. A **married** man or woman with a needful concern for the well-being of his family would have been less likely to do that. The situation illustrates Paul's point that the single life with its greater simplicity in obligations allows a potentially greater commitment of time, resources, and self **to the Lord** than would be possible for a married person dutifully carrying out the marital and familial obligations attached to that state.¹¹

7:32–35 If 7:29–31 expands on the "present crisis" (7:26), then 7:32–35 elaborates on "the troubles in this life" facing those who choose to marry.³⁵⁷ The two sections are linked by the word "world," which concludes 7:29–31 and is a key term in 7:32–35.³⁵⁸ **If the world in its present form is passing away, then believers contemplating marriage need to give due**

⁵⁸⁰ Ibid., 101–10; Wimbush, *Paul, the Worldly Ascetic*, 49–71; Deming, *Paul on Marriage*, 199–203: "The logic of 7:32–35 runs parallel to the 'Cynic' position" (199).

¹¹ David K. Lowery, "[1 Corinthians](#)," in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, ed. J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck, vol. 2 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 520.

³⁵⁷ So Blomberg, *1 Corinthians*, 151–52.

³⁵⁸ Occurring three times in four verses. "World" in this context does not carry negative connotations per se in the same way that "flesh" (NIV, "in this life") in 7:28 refers to mere earthly existence.

consideration to the commitment of marriage in relation to pleasing the Lord and serving him without distraction. Thus, Paul gives yet another reason to those contemplating marriage to remain single, namely, that they may be free from concern and serve the Lord without distraction. Marriage entails many responsibilities equally for husband and wife as each seeks to please the other.³⁵⁹ Such an arrangement inevitably leads to divided interests (7:34). Paul has no desire to restrict them, but he advises them in this way for their own good (7:35; cf. 7:28b). The word translated “good” means “advantageous”³⁶⁰ and is cognate to the verb translated “beneficial”³⁶¹ in the slogan of 6:12, “Not everything is beneficial” (cf. also 10:23).³⁶² In 10:33 Paul writes similarly that he seeks to please others, not seeking his own advantage but the advantage of others.³⁶³ The notion of what is best, beneficial, or advantageous is a critical element of Paul’s decision-making and a key theme that runs through chap. 14. Paul wants the Corinthians to know that he has their best interests in view. He will clarify yet again in the following verses that it is no sin to choose marriage, yet apparently they have posed a question to him regarding marriage, and he is answering them as the Lord’s trustworthy representative in the light of their present situation.¹²

³⁵⁹ Barrett (*First Corinthians*, 179) notes that, against the traditional reading 7:32 might mean, “The unmarried is anxious about the things of the Lord” in the sense of seeking to please the Lord through meritorious works. This interpretation assumes that there is a pro-celibacy party in Corinth promoting celibacy as a higher spiritual existence. Paul replies that one should not be anxious to please the Lord in this way.

³⁶⁰ Gk. σύμφορος.

³⁶¹ Gk. συμφέρω.

³⁶² See also 12:7, “Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good.”

³⁶³ In 10:33 the same term is used as in 7:35 (σύμφορος).

¹² Mark Taylor, *1 Corinthians*, ed. E. Ray Clendenen, vol. 28, The New American Commentary (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2014), 191–192.

7:32 The opening words of this verse indicate that Paul is taking his recommendation that single men and women remain unmarried a step further.³⁸¹ He writes: Now (or but) *I would like you to be free from concern*. The argument moves from the mundane and practical in vv. 25–28 (“the present crisis” and “troubles in this life”) and the eschatological in vv. 29–31 (“the time is short”; “this world in its present form is passing away”) to the christological in vv. 32–35. This third point makes explicit what underlies the first two, namely, that Paul wants the Corinthians to live lives of undistracted devotion to the Lord.

The key word in this section is *concern* or “anxiety.” It appears five times in vv. 32–34 as both a noun and a verb. In Paul’s view, whereas the married person is anxious to please their spouse, the unmarried person is anxious to please the Lord. The word can be used in both a negative and a positive sense. For instance, Paul wrote to the Philippians, “Do not be anxious about anything.” But in the same letter he can also commend Timothy as one who is “genuinely anxious for [the Philippians’] welfare” (RSV). Context determines whether the anxiety in view is good or bad. In the case of vv. 32–34 it is not that either of the “anxieties” (for the spouse and for the Lord) is necessarily negative.³⁸² While it may be possible to be overly anxious to please the Lord, that is not what Paul has in mind, and married people are right to concern themselves with the happiness of their spouses. Paul’s concern is for them to have as few distractions from their service and devotion to the Lord as possible.

Paul does not want to eradicate *concern*, which would be a dubious goal at best, but to refocus it and to set priorities. The story of Mary and Martha in Luke 10:40–41 illustrates the same concern. When Jesus came for a meal, Martha was “distracted by all the preparations that had to be made.” Jesus rebukes her for being “*anxious* and upset about many things,” using the same word for *concern* prominent in 1 Corinthians 7:32–35. Mary, on the other hand, “has chosen what is better ... [for, as Jesus explains,] few things are needed—or indeed only one.” Both in Luke and here in 1 Corinthians the point is not to disparage household duties or marriage respectively, but to put the accent on something of greater concern.

The unit exhibits the careful address to males and females characteristic of the chapter. Paul addresses single men in vv. 32b–34a and single women, with some variation, in v. 34b. Verse 35 reprises v. 32a, forming an inclusio, thereby reinforcing Paul’s overriding aim to secure “undistracted devotion to the Lord.”

Throughout vv. 32–35 Paul explains that he prefers singleness because marriage makes life more complicated and can be a distraction from devotion to the Lord. Even if Stoics and Cynics also warned about the distractions of married life, the priority of pleasing God in these verses has more in common with biblical and Jewish thought. Specifically, it may have been derived from Deuteronomy 6, which Paul alludes to in the next chapter (8:6): “Love the Lord your God with all your heart.” Martin McNamara notes the Palestinian Targum to the Pentateuch’s treatment of Deuteronomy 6 and its relevance to New Testament teaching on the undivided heart: “Israel was commanded to love God ‘with all her heart’ [Deut. 6:5]. In the targum full

³⁸¹ Wimbush, *Paul the Worldly Ascetic*, 49, notes the adversative or transitional force of δέ following the verb “to wish” and the second-person plural pronoun “you” (ὁμᾶς), which does not appear in vv. 29–31. Taken together these mark “a significant turn.”

RSV Revised Standard Version

³⁸² Contra Barrett, 179.

devotion to God is described as ‘a perfect heart,’ i.e., one completely set on God, not divided between him and created things.”³⁸³ Furthermore, in several rabbinic texts, worldly preoccupations, such as a wife, are seen as a potential distraction from the study of Torah.³⁸⁴ Paul’s sentiments in this section are thus a subtle polemic reminiscent of his words in v. 19. It would not be the first time that Christ replaces the law in Paul’s appropriation of traditional teaching.³⁸⁵

Paul observes that *an unmarried man is concerned about the Lord’s affairs—how he can please the Lord*. Unencumbered by the legitimate concerns to look after a wife and children, *the unmarried man* is free to concentrate his undivided attention on other things. The other things that Paul has in mind are “the things of the Lord,” defined as being occupied with the question of *how he can please the Lord*³⁸⁶ instead of how he may please his wife. This conclusion is doubtless based on Paul’s own missionary experience, which included various hardships not conducive to having a wife (e.g., 1 Cor. 9:5, 12; 2 Cor. 11:23–27). It recalls his comments in v. 7a: “I wish that all of you were as I am.”

“Pleasing the Lord” is one of Paul’s crisply comprehensive ways of distilling what is important in life (cf. v. 19b). The equivalent of “keeping the commandments of God” (v. 19b), he uses it in contexts of divine judgment: “we make it our goal to please him, whether we are at home in the body or away from it” (2 Cor. 5:9). The referent of “Lord,” which occurs five times in vv. 32–35, is probably not God, but Christ. Although Paul can speak of “pleasing God” (1 Thess 4:1; cf. 2:15), in 2 Corinthians 5:8–10 “pleasing *the Lord*” is associated with “the judgment seat of *Christ*.” Further, the comparison of pleasing one’s spouse with pleasing Christ is implicitly nuptial imagery, and throughout the New Testament the believer’s spiritual marriage is to Christ (cf. 2 Cor. 11:2; see also comments on 6:16–20). As Paul will write only thirteen verses later, “for us ... there is but one Lord, Jesus Christ” (8:6).

7:33 Paul completes his advice to single men with the words: *But a married man is concerned about the affairs of this world—how he can please his wife*. This verse is the exact complement of v. 32b except that *a married man* replaces “an unmarried man,” *the affairs of this world* replaces “the affairs of the Lord,” and *please his wife* replaces “please the Lord.”

Paul is not saying that those who are married cannot please the Lord. Just as vv. 29–31 contain sharp paradoxes, here we find arresting hyperbole—Paul is not saying that married men are concerned only about their wives and about nothing else. Nonetheless, this verse and the next both validate the proper concern married Christians should have for the happiness of their spouses. Otherwise Paul would have said that married people should simply decide to concern themselves with pleasing the Lord rather than pleasing their spouses, and single people could go ahead and marry with the same understanding. A married person who neglects or alienates their

³⁸³ Martin McNamara, *Targum and Testament: Aramaic Paraphrases of the Hebrew Bible: A Light on the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1972), 122–23.

³⁸⁴ For example, ‘*Abot de Rabbi Nathan* a. 20, which includes in its warnings against distractions from the study of and devotion to Torah, “the wife of a man.” The phrase could refer to one’s own wife or the wife of another, in which case the distraction would not be marriage but adultery.

³⁸⁵ Cf., e.g., the use of Deut. 30:12–13 in Rom. 10:6–8.

³⁸⁶ The two phrases are in apposition.

spouse by dedicating themselves solely to the service of God has misunderstood what devotion to the Lord requires of them and fails to honor God. It is Paul's recognition of the very real and legitimate concerns that married people have for the other members of their family that plays such a significant part in his preference for singleness. It is better, he says, not to be in a position where one must give significant time and attention to family members rather than to the Lord.

Paul's reference to *the affairs of this world* should be understood in light of his earlier comments to the effect that "this world in its present form is passing away" (see on v. 31). In his view it is better to invest one's life in the service of the one who is eternal than in being occupied with concerns about transient things. As in 7:7a, Paul reveals his preference for singleness, but it should not be read absolutely.³⁸⁷ Just as 7:7b allowed for a different assessment of personal circumstances, so in vv. 36–38 Paul will allow engaged couples the freedom to choose. Paul is not giving direction in a casuistic fashion, but offers a godly perspective, informed by eschatology and Christology, from which to make responsible choices "before God" (v. 24b).

7:34 Here Paul explains that he is concerned that the Corinthians serve Christ wholeheartedly. In his experience, "a married man" is worse off in this respect than the unmarried because *his interests are divided*. Paul uses the same verb as he did in 1:13: "Is Christ *divided*?"³⁸⁸ Thiselton explains well Paul's thinking here: "The married man finds himself apportioned to both his wife and to the Lord; and it is this parceling out of time, attention, energies, and tasks that means he is 'pulled in two directions' [REB]."³⁸⁹

Having counseled the single men in vv. 32b–34a, Paul addresses the women in the rest of v. 34. The same advice is given with two differences. First, the women are addressed with a more complex description, as (literally) "the woman, the unmarried (woman) and the virgin," which either means "the unmarried woman and the virgin" or "the unmarried and virgin woman." The grammar is ambiguous, and multiple construals are possible.³⁹⁰ There could be (1) one noun

³⁸⁷ The contrast between v. 32b and v. 33 is not between good and bad anxieties, but between the objects of the anxieties, single-focused concern for the Lord and concern for one's wife (as well).

³⁸⁸ Gk. μεμέρισται, perfect indicative passive of μερίζω, which refers, once again, to the present state of the subject. The concerns of a married man *are divided*. There is no hint of a past action leading to this state, as traditional analyses tended to assume. Rather, the perfect tense is being used to describe the current situation of the subject.

REB Revised English Bible

³⁸⁹ Thiselton, 590.

³⁹⁰ The difficulty in construing Paul's text has also led to a variety of textual variants in the MSS. The text supported by NA²⁷ is witnessed to by some ancient and important MSS, as well as some important versions (Ⲛ¹⁵, B, P, 6, 104, 365, 1175, 1505, *pc*, t, vg, co, Eusebius). It reads ἡ γυνή ἢ ἄγαμος καὶ ἡ παρθένος ("the unmarried woman and the virgin"). Other ancient and important witnesses (e.g., Ⲛ⁴⁶, Ⲭ, A) have ἡ γυνή ἢ ἄγαμος καὶ ἡ παρθένος ἢ ἄγαμος ("the unmarried woman and the unmarried virgin"). Finally, Western MSS, some ancient versions and Fathers, and the vast majority of minuscules (D, F, G, Ψ, Ⲙ, ar, b, sy^[P], Cyprian, Ambrosiaster, Speculum [Ps.-Augustine]) have ἡ γυνή καὶ ἡ παρθένος ἢ ἄγαμος ("the woman and the unmarried virgin"). At first sight the final version seems more difficult, but only when, with

modified by two adjectives (“unmarried and virgin woman”), or (2) two nouns acting as a compound subject (“the unmarried woman and the virgin”), or (3) an epexegetical phrase referring to one woman (“the unmarried woman, that is, the virgin”). The first option is unlikely; because “the virgin” is normally understood to function substantively since it does so everywhere else in 1 Corinthians and the New Testament, it should be understood that way here as well. What Paul says about the opportunity to be devoted to the Lord clearly applies equally to all categories of unmarried women; therefore, the third option would seem unlikely since it would seem to unduly limit the application to virgins. The second option could be interpreted in two different ways. If two exclusive categories are intended, the first presumably refers to “the woman who is currently free of wedlock” (i.e., divorcees and widows) and the second to “the woman who has never married” (Thiselton).³⁹¹ On the other hand, Paul may be referring to two overlapping categories, all unmarried women (including divorcees, widows, and young single women who have never been married [“virgins”]) and virgins in particular (the unmarried woman and [our special interest] the virgin [in particular]). Since Paul’s point applies equally to virgins and other unmarried women (as v. 32 applies to all unmarried men), he probably references the broad category of which his statement will be true and then highlights the particular subset of women he is most directly addressing in this section. That is, it applies to unmarried women (in general) and virgins (in particular). A second difference from Paul’s advice to the men is that instead of “how to please the Lord” he adds: *Her aim is to be devoted to the Lord in both body and spirit*. Some have suggested that this phrase, “holy both in body and in spirit,” is a quotation from “the Corinthian ascetical party”³⁹² which they used to describe “a specific group of well-intentioned and zealous unmarried women in Corinth.”³⁹³ However, such speculation is unwarranted, given Paul’s consistent, apparently independent concern with holiness and purity issues throughout the letter (see Introduction, 21–22). Holiness here is not a reference to avoiding sexual intercourse, but carries the general Old Testament sense of “belonging exclusively to God,”³⁹⁴ as in 1:2. The combination of *body and spirit* describes the whole person

most modern translations, we understand the first part of this verse to complete the thought of v. 33. Scribes who thought v. 34 began a new thought read the beginning of the verse as “And there is a difference also between ...” (cf. ERV, KJV). The fact that it is hard to see how any distinction between an unmarried woman and a virgin would make sense of the rest of the verse (since neither has to worry about a husband) “may have led copyists to shift the adjective [“unmarried”] from *γυνή* to *παρθένος*” (Metzger, *Textual Commentary*, 490), leaving the distinct categories of a wife (who has to worry about a husband) and an unmarried virgin (who does not). The second variant (with “unmarried” after both “woman” and “virgin”) probably reflects a conflation of the other two readings (so also Metzger). The first variant presented above best explains the origin of the other two and is therefore most likely to be original.

³⁹¹ The singular verb *is concerned* does not decide the case since it could be used of “a sense construction for the singular collective category” (Thiselton, 590).

³⁹² Barrett, 181.

³⁹³ Collins, 292; cf. A. C. Wire, *The Corinthian Women Prophets* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990), 90–97.

³⁹⁴ Thiselton.

and simply serves to heighten and extend Paul’s description of the goal of total devotion to the Lord.³⁹⁵

7:35 *I am saying this* refers to Paul’s counsel to single believers to stay unmarried because of the distractions of married life. This he says to them *for your own good*, profit, or advantage, for practical and pastoral rather than ascetic reasons.³⁹⁶ This is a positive way of saying that he writes “to spare you ... troubles in this life” (v. 28b). That he writes *not to restrict you* (literally, “not to throw a noose over you”³⁹⁷) reinforces the point made in v. 28 that those who choose to marry in spite of Paul’s advice are not sinning. Coercive restraint is not Paul’s intention. Rather, his purpose is to promote orderly, undistracted conduct: *but that you may live in a right way in undivided devotion to the Lord*.

Three terms define the existence Paul has in mind: *to live in a right way* translates the adjective “seemly,” “proper,” or “fitting,”³⁹⁸ and *undivided devotion* reflects both an adjective³⁹⁹ meaning “being in constant attendance, *constantly in service*” (BDAG) and an adverb meaning “without distraction.”⁴⁰⁰ The adjective and adverb work together to reinforce the idea of constant, single-minded service. The line may be taken to refer to two separate concerns: 1) dedicating themselves to what is proper/appropriate, and 2) serving the Lord with undistracted devotion (so ESV, NRSV, NAB, NASB, CSB, NJB). Or it may be taken to promote one priority through a combination of adjectives and an adverb that are to be taken together: “so that without distraction you may give notable and constant service to the Lord” (NET), “that you may live in a right way in undivided devotion to the Lord” (NIV, TNIV), “I want you to do whatever will help you serve the Lord best, with as few distractions as possible” (NLT). “Propriety” as an abstract value has not been a concern in this context, but in 1 Corinthians 14:40 Paul clearly affirms that the worship of God “should be done in a fitting and orderly way”; therefore, it seems likely that Paul has the propriety of worship itself in mind here as well. In other words, Paul’s

³⁹⁵ Schrage, 2:180.

³⁹⁶ Gk. σύμφορος.

³⁹⁷ Gk. βρόχον ὑμῶν ἐπιβάλλω; cf. Thiselton, 592.

³⁹⁸ Gk. εὐσχήμων, “pert[aining] to being appropriate for display, *proper, presentable*” (BDAG); cf. 12:23–24, where parts of the human anatomy are presentable or unpresentable.

³⁹⁹ Gk. εὐπάρεδρος.

BDAG W. Bauer, F. W. Danker, W. F. Arndt, and F. W. Gingrich, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (3d ed.)

⁴⁰⁰ Gk. περισπᾶστως.

ESV English Standard Version

NRSV New Revised Standard Version

NAB New American Bible

NASB New American Standard Bible

CSB Holman Christian Standard Bible

NJB New Jerusalem Bible

NET New English Translation

NIV New International Version

TNIV Today’s New International Version

NLT New Living Translation

intention is that they might dedicate themselves to serving the Lord in the most fitting or proper way and with undivided attention.¹³

¹³ Roy E. Ciampa and Brian S. Rosner, [*The First Letter to the Corinthians*](#), The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2010), 349–354.