

**Faithfulness in Singleness Week #1 – Why Talk About Singleness? January 15<sup>th</sup>, 2023<sup>1</sup>**

1. INTRODUCTION

- a. Some things that tend to be thought of about singleness that are wrong
  - i. That singleness is bad or wrong
  - ii. That those who are single will not have the same blessings as those who are married.
  - iii. Some also say that singleness is good but for unbiblical reasons
    - 1. Not stuck with one person
    - 2. Selfish reasons - able to do whatever I want
    - 3. Professional growth
    - 4. Protecting self - not wanting to be hurt
    - 5. Prolonging adolescence (especially for men)
- b. The Bible is sufficient for talking about singleness because the bible is sufficient to address all the issues that are common to man.
  - i. 1 Cor 10:13 “No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man, but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, so that you will be able to endure it.”
  - ii. Singleness can be a trial for some. It can be seen as a hardship, a temptation. Therefore, the Bible has the solutions to help us think through this particular struggle.

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<sup>1</sup> Notes adapted from Keith Christensen, “Counseling Singleness, pt. 1 and 2,” Center for Biblical Counseling and Discipleship (thebcd.org).

- c. Some temptations that are connected to the being single
  - i. Sexual immorality - 1 Cor 7:9 “But if they do not have self-control, let them marry, for it is better to marry than to burn *with passion.*”
  - ii. Discontentment - learning to trust in God’s sovereignty for where he has you.
  - iii. Idleness
    - 1. 1 Tim 5:13 - single widows “And at the same time they also learn *to be* idle, as they go around from house to house. And not merely idle, but also gossips and busybodies, talking about things not proper *to mention.*”
  - iv. Loneliness - Gen 2:18 “It is not good for the man should be alone...”
  - v. Isolation/Withdrawing from Community - Prov 18:1 “He who separates himself seeks *his own* desire, He breaks out *in dispute* against all sound wisdom.”
  - vi. Shame – “I am not married because something is wrong with me”
  - vii. Coveting – Ex 20:17 “...you shall not covet your neighbors wife [spouse]...”
- d. The desire to be married, just like any other desire that anyone can have, can at times be at odds with seeking to find joy and satisfaction in Christ and not in our circumstances.
  - i. We are seeking to find Mr. or Mrs. Right, and at times we can be blinded by our idolatrous desires which will lead to harm in the future.
  - ii. We ignore warning from others about a relationship.
  - iii. We neglect serving the church and others because of a relationship.

2. Biblical View of Singleness

a. Singleness, like Marriage, is a Gift from God

1 Cor 7:7 “Yet I wish that all men were even as I myself am. However, each man has his own gift from God, one this way, and another that.”

i. What is the gift of singleness?

1. A special God-given ability to be content and self-controlled as a single person
2. Or, just the state of being single in and of itself

ii. How can you know if you have gift of singleness?

1. Are you married or are you single?
2. What is a gift?

iii. I can trust in God’s will for me in this season of my life where I am single

1. This gift is sovereignly given to us
2. Just as God has given us spiritual gifts as he wills (1 Cor 12), he has also given us the gifts of marriage or singleness, just as he wills.

iv. If singleness is a gift, we must thank God and not be discontent with the gift he has given us, or complain that he has given a different gift to others.

v. We may not want to be in the situation we are in, but we are still to thank the Lord for his good gifts.

1. James 1:17 “Every good thing given and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shifting shadow.”
  2. 1 Cor 7:32 “But I want you to be free from concern. One who is unmarried is concerned about the things of the Lord, how he may please the Lord.”
- vi. We are to enjoy the gift of singleness
1. 1 Tim 6:17 “Command those who are rich in this present age not to be haughty or to set their hope on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly supplies us with all things to enjoy.” - the context is money, but the same can be said of any gift. We are not to set our hearts on the gift, but on God, while at the same time enjoying the gift.
  2. Eccl 5:18-20 “Here is what I have seen to be good, which is beautiful: to eat, to drink, and to see good in all one’s labor in which he labors under the sun *during* the few days of his life which God has given him; for this is his portion.<sup>19</sup> Furthermore, as for every man to whom God has given riches and wealth, He has also empowered him to eat from them and to take up his portion and be glad in his labor; this is the gift of God.<sup>20</sup> For he will not remember much the days of his life because God allows him to occupy himself with the gladness of his heart.”
- vii. Suggested Application:
1. Write down one reason why your current state of singleness can be called good.
  2. What temptations are you facing with being single?
  3. How might you need to begin to think more biblically about the gift of singleness?

- b. Singleness, like Marriage, is a Calling by God
  - i. Cor 7:17 “Only, as the Lord has assigned to each one, as God has called each, in this manner let him walk. And so I direct in all the churches.”
  - ii. Each believer is to be faithful to God in the state that God has them in. Either married or single, we are to see that what God has given us is by God’s good and sovereign hand.
  - iii. In v. 24 we see the same calling, to remain where God has each of us. “Brothers, each one is to remain with God in that *condition* in which he was called.”
  - iv. V.9 says that it is okay to pursue marriage if you are single and have a desire to be married. “But if they do not have self-control, let them marry, for it is better to marry than to burn *with passion*.”
  - v. We must guard against thinking, “if only I was \_\_\_\_\_” - Married, in singleness, etc.
  - vi. What matters most is not what state we are in, but if we are being obedient to God, no matter our relational status.
  - vii. Suggested Application:
    - 1. When you are tempted to struggle with wanting your life to be different, set your mind on what commands of God you can obey.
    - 2. How can you serve and use your gifts to build up the body of Christ?
- c. Singleness, like Marriage, is not a Necessarily a Lifelong Calling by God
  - i. Spouses die; some will divorce for both biblical and unbiblical reasons
  - ii. Single people will get married

- iii. Those who have the desire to be married should pursue marriage
  - iv. It is not wrong to get married or to stay single. To seek for a spouse is not contrary to being content in being single. But you must not be seeking for a spouse outside of the requirements God has given in his Word. Meaning that a believer must only marry in the Lord.
  - v. No one should be pressured to marry or to stay single
    - 1. 1 Tim 4:3 “who forbid marriage and advocate abstaining from foods which God created to be shared in with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth.”
  - vi. If you desire to marry, talk with other mature believers about your desire, and ask them to help you as you are pursuing a relationship.
  - vii. Marriage is normative
- d. The Call to Single Christians to Consider the Benefits of Singleness to the End that Some Might Choose not to Pursue Marriage
- i. 1 Cor 7:32-35 “But I want you to be free from concern. One who is unmarried is concerned about the things of the Lord, how he may please the Lord.<sup>33</sup> But one who is married is concerned about the things of the world, how he may please his wife,<sup>34</sup> and *his interests* have been divided. The woman who is unmarried, and the virgin, is concerned about the things of the Lord, that she may be holy both in body and spirit. But one who is married is concerned about the things of the world, how she may please her husband.<sup>35</sup> Now this I say for your own benefit, not to put a restraint upon you, but to promote propriety and undistracted devotion to the Lord.”
  - ii. 1 Cor 7:32 – the single person is free from distractions that, often and rightly so, prevent married couples or those with kids from doing more for the Lord. Spouses have to think about each other now and are no longer able to do as much ministry.

- iii. These godly advantages are available to all singles regardless of their desire to get married or not.
- iv. All unmarried believers are to take advantage of the gifts and benefits of singleness as long as the Lord gives them that gift. They are to make the best use of the time the Lord has given them as a single person. It is a stewardship of God, and will take time and effort to think through how to make the most of this gift.
- v. Those who choose to think “how can I be a good steward of the time God has given me as a single person?” will often be more content and more productive.
- vi. Be careful not to squander the unique opportunities God has given you. The temptation to be idle and selfish with your time is easy to give in to, but it must be battled against. You are to use your freedom to serve in ministry towards others in the church.
- vii. Gal 5:13, “For you were called to freedom, brothers; only *do not turn* your freedom into an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another.”
- viii. Not using your freedom to serve the flesh. The world sees singleness as good since you are free to do whatever you want. The Bible sees singleness as good since you are free to give yourself more to others.
- ix. Our singleness is not for us but for the Lord.
- x. Suggested Application:
  - 1. “How can I as a single maximize my relative freedom from anxieties in undivided interest for the cause of Christ for the building up of the body?”
  - 2. “What can I do to serve the Lord and his people in my current singleness that would be more difficult for a married person or if I am married in the future?”

3. “Am I making the most of my time as a single by serving, discipling others, or being disciplined?” - We will touch more on this next week.
  4. Look to examples of faithful singles in church history and how they served the Lord. How was being single helpful for them in their ministry? Look to examples like Henry Martin, who desired to be married but never did and was a missionary in the Middle East. Amy Carmichael, George Whitefield (for most of this life), J. Gresham Machen, The Apostle Paul.
  5. For those who desire to remain single (even for now), consider your motives. Are your reasons for foregoing marriage the godly reasons outlined in 1 Cor 7? Do you need to repent of ungodly motives?
- e. Singleness, like Marriage, has Unique Joys and Hardships.
- i. There are blessings in marriage - Prov 5:18 “Let your fountain be blessed, And be glad in the wife of your youth.”
  - ii. But there are also difficulties/troubles - 1 Cor 7:28 “But if you marry, you have not sinned. And if a virgin marries, she has not sinned. Yet such will have trouble in this life, and I am trying to spare you.”
  - iii. Getting married will not automatically make your life easier. Yes, it is a blessing and gift, but marriage also comes with its own unique trials.
  - iv. Matt 19:6-12, “So they are no longer two, but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let no man separate.”<sup>7</sup> They said to Him, “Why then did Moses command to GIVE HER A CERTIFICATE OF DIVORCE AND SEND *her AWAY?*”<sup>8</sup> He said to them, “Because of your hardness of heart Moses permitted you to divorce your wives; but from the beginning it has not been this way.<sup>9</sup> And I say to you, whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another woman commits adultery.”<sup>10</sup> The disciples said to Him, “If the relationship of the man with his wife is like this, it is better not to marry.”<sup>11</sup> But He said to them, “Not all men *can* accept this statement, but *only* those to whom it has been given.<sup>12</sup> For there are eunuchs who were born that way from their mother’s womb; and there are eunuchs who were made eunuchs by men; and



there are *also* eunuchs who made themselves eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of heaven. He who is able to accept *this*, let him accept *it*.”

- v. Understanding that there are both joys and hardships in marriage and in singleness can help to root out envy and the thought of “God is not being very good to me.”

f. Singleness Does Not Mean Aloneness or Incompleteness

- i. Marriage is not the only way God deals with someone being alone. The church is a key way God has given us to help with loneliness.
- ii. Also, you do not need to be married or to have a sexual relationship to be made complete as a human. The world would have you believe the opposite - saying that sex and intimate relationships are essential to experience full humanity.
- iii. The church is a family – 1 Tim 5:1-2, “Do not sharply rebuke an older man, but *rather* plead with *him* as a father, *to* the younger men as brothers,<sup>2</sup> the older women as mothers, *and* the younger women as sisters, in all purity.”
- iv. Single Christians are not without family. The NT also speaks about having spiritual children.
  - 1. 1 Tim 1:2, “To Timothy, *my* genuine child in *the* faith”
  - 2. Rom 16:13, “Greet Rufus, a choice man in the Lord, also his mother and mine.” Paul had a spiritual mother.
  - 3. All Christians, single or married, are to seek to have spiritual children. Meaning that discipleship is a normal part of the life of believer.
- v. Companionship that comes with true friendships.
  - 1. David and Jonathan

2. Prov 18:24 “A man of *too many* friends comes to ruin, But there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother.”
  3. Friendship is not the same as a marital union/oneness. Yet friendships are wonderful, and many single people can have more intimate and close friendships.
- vi. Hospitality – married people should have single people in their homes, and single people should practice hospitality as well by having other people in their homes, both families and other singles.
- vii. Suggested Application:
1. “How much are you actively pursuing life with fellow believers?”
  2. “How much are you initiating or receiving invitations of hospitality?”