

SRMBC Family Bible Study

The Gift of Singleness/The Gift of Marriage

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Part I: The Gift of Singleness: Space to Love

I Corinthians 7:25-35

Many churches seem to give preference to married people in leadership positions, programs and sermon illustrations. However, Scripture articulates clearly God's special interest in people who are single (especially when it is not by their own will). As a struggling single parent, you may feel uncomfortable in church among flocks of rosy, well-put-together, seemingly happy intact families. It's not that God doesn't care about them, but in the Bible, you will find that God really wants **you** to know of his watchful care and protection of you and your children.

Group Discussion.

Throw out as many perks of the single lifestyle—trivial and substantial—as you can. Be honest about what you like!

Natural Perks

- Freedom To Do More Of What You Want To When You Want To Do It.
- Not Having To Repeat Yourself Over And Over.
- Greater Control Over Your Money (Having More Money).
- Not Having To "Check – In" All The Time.
- Able To Watch What You Want On TV/Cable.
- Being Able Use The Bathroom/Shower ¹ (Hallelujah!).
- Being Able To Leave The Bed Unmade If You Want To.
- To Fold The Towels And Laundry The Way You Want.
- Less Stress And No Arguments (992 Arguments...!)

Spiritual Perks

- More Opportunities To Attend Church and become more Involved in Ministry.
- Time To Read and Understand the Word of God. (Bible Study, SS. Classes...)
- More Time be available to Special Things For the Lord (Missions, Assoc/Convention Delegate...)
- Greater Opportunity to share the Love and Gospel of Christ with more and more people.
- Time for personal, prayer, and worship with the Lord.
- More Money and resources available to give to the church and the Work of Ministry.

Is there anything intrinsically good in singleness, or is it always a mistake—an inability to attach, the result of a former partner's failure to love or a failure to find "the one"? The apostle Paul, himself a lifelong single, describes both the struggles and the gifts of singleness.

Read I Corinthians 7:25 – 35

1. What is Paul's key recommendation to singles? What exceptions does he suggest (v. 28)?

Recommendation(s):

- Overall, as it pertains the spread of the Gospel and the work of the Kingdom of God it is preferable to remain single.
- That everyone ought to remain in state they were in (single or married) when they were saved
- Choosing to remain single (celibate) for sake of the Kingdom is not a sin.

Exception(s):

- If a single person marries, they have not sinned – however they must recognize the issues that will be faced in marriage (Prov 14:4)
- For singles in relationship in order to avoid fornication, it is better to marry (Cf. I Cor. 7:8 – 9).

Marrying is not in itself a sin, but marrying at that time was likely to bring inconvenience upon them, and add to the calamities of the times; and therefore he [Paul] thought it advisable and expedient that such as could contain should refrain from it; but adds that he would not lay celibacy on them as a yoke...

2. How does Paul describe the urgent situation that prompts this recommendation?

Vs. 26: Present Distress (Crisis) – Paul recognized the state of the sinful world – with its ever-increasing temptations and persecution against the church and believers.

Vs. 29: Time is Short – Paul believed the Jesus' return was imminent. He wanted the Corinthian's and all disciples to consider looking at their lives in the light of eternity so as not allow temporary earthly desires to disrupt our priorities.

Matt 6:33: But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you

3. What troubles has your singleness spared you?

- Troubles Of Distractions From God's Purpose For My Life.
- No "Baby- Mama/Daddy Drama"
- No Std's or Anything Like That
- Satan Has Less Of A Chance Of Getting A Foothold Or Stronghold In My Life.
- No Wasting Time In A Bad Relationship.
- Time To Get My Own Life Together (To be ready for the My Future Spouse God has for Me.

"Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight." (Proverbs 3:5 – 6)

4. What contrasting or contradictory behaviors does Paul recommend in verses 29-31?

Behavior	Contrast and Contradiction
those who have wives	as though they had none
those who weep	as though they did not weep
those who rejoice	as though they did not rejoice
those who buy	as though they did not possess
those who use this world as not misusing it	as not misusing it

“My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one. They are not of the world, even as I am not of it. Sanctify them by the truth...” (John 17:15 – 16)

5. How would a married person “live as if they did not” have a spouse?

What Paul Does Not Mean

- Paul Does Not Mean The One Should Neglect Their Spouse/Family
- To Be So Focused On Heavenly Things That You Will Be No Earthly Good.
- While singleness would be preferable Marriage for the Believer is Sin.

What Paul Does Mean

- A Married Person should make themselves available to use their gifts and talents to edify the Church.
- Married persons should be ready to put the Lord’s work/calling above the desires of their spouse/Family
- It is understandable/permissible that some attention a single person gave to the Lord will need to go one’s spouse once married.

It may be helpful to think of some married leaders in the early church:

- Peter was married, yet he left behind his fishing livelihood to travel with Jesus.
- Later he was jailed for preaching about Jesus (Acts 4)
- If he had been thinking only of his family’s needs he wouldn’t have taken risks like this.

6. What contrast do verses 32 – 34 draw between married and single people?

The Single Man

- He who is unmarried cares for the things of the Lord
- How he may please the Lord.

The Single Woman

- The unmarried woman cares about the things of the Lord
- that she may be holy both in body and in spirit

The Married Man

- He who is married cares for the things of World
- How he may please his wife (happy wife, happy life)

The Married Woman

- The married woman cares about the things of the world
- That she may please her husband

7. How would you summarize Paul's concern "for your own good"? (That is, what is he trying to promote in singles' lives?)
- **for your own good** - to serve/profit you - not to display my apostolic authority.
 - **not to restrict you** - image from throwing a noose over an animal in hunting. Not that by Strictness with the fear of committing sin (Good, Better, Best).
 - **but that you may live in a right way** – honor God with your life under the present circumstances (being single).
 - **undivided devotion to the Lord** - attend upon--literally, "assiduously wait on"; sitting down to the duty. Compare Luk 10:39, Mary; Luk 2:37, "Anna. . . a widow, who departed not from the temple, but served God with fastings and prayers night and day" (1Ti 5:5 distraction--the same Greek as "cumbered" (Luk 10:40, Martha).
8. How could being single keep you free to focus more on the Lord? (Think about your prayer life, attention, lifestyle choices and ministry to others.)
- More Time For Regular Prayer And Bible Reading - Devotion.
 - Better Able To Use Time To Be A Blessing To Others (Phone Calls, Visitation).
 - Opportunity To Do More To Further The Ministry Of The Local Church.
 - A Better Opportunity To Give A Spontaneous "Yes" To The Lord.
 - A Better Opportunity To Give A Long-term "Yes" To The Lord.
 - Greater Opportunity To Learn To Trust The Lord For And In Everything.

Whether your singleness is chosen or not, pray that it will open you to larger devotion to Christ. Thank God for His devotion to you.

Keys For Living



One of the greatest blessings of being single is having a greater opportunity and availability to the worship and the ministry of Christ and His church.



As a single person our desire for marriage or companionship should never overshadow our desire to serve the Lord.



Whether single by choice or unwanted circumstances, God will give us the grace and the resources to enjoy whatever state we are in.