

Biblical Solutions for Life Issues

Topic 27 – Singleness

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Introduction

Last week we looked at the foundation, purposes, and problems in marriage. Today, we will look at what the Bible says about singleness and the specific areas where single people may struggle. We will not look at how non-single believers can specifically minister to single believers since we assume that all believers are responsible for ministering the “one-anothers” to each other:

- Love one another (John 15:12; 3:16; 13:34-35; 1 John 4:11-12; 1 Cor 13:4-7; 1 Pet 4:8)
- Build up one another (Rom 14:19)
- Give preference to one another (Phil 2:3-4; Rom 12:10)
- Encourage one another (1 Thess 5:11; Heb 3:13; 10:24-25)
- Serve one another (Gal 5:13; 1 Pet 4:10)
- Accept one another (Rom 15:7)
- Be devoted to one another (Rom 12:10)
- Be affectionate to one another (1 Pet 5:14)
- Be hospitable to one another (1 Pet 4:9)
- Comfort one another (1 Thess 4:18)

❖ **Are you ministering the “one anothers” to other believers?**

Survey of Singleness in the Bible

In the Old Testament (OT) and carrying over into the New Testament (NT), among God’s people, because of the focus on the command of Genesis 1:28, marriage was the norm. Boys and girls married young; often shortly after puberty – typically 12 or 13 for girls and 15 or 16 for boys.

²⁷God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. ²⁸**God blessed them; and God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over every living thing that moves on the earth.”** Gen 1:27-28

❖ **Do parents today expect too little from their children?**

From surveying the OT instances of singleness, it appears that singleness rarely occurred. It was often seen as a transition from a state of never married-to-married or married-to-married.

- Young people waiting to get married
- Widow(er)s
- Divorced
- Eunuchs (In the OT, someone castrated)
- Inability to marry because of disease or severe poverty

In addition, in the OT, God gave a divine call to singleness. This is only recorded once and was given to Jeremiah.

¹The word of the Lord also came to me saying, ²“You shall not take a wife for yourself nor have sons or daughters in this place.” Jer 16:1

The NT presents similar reasons for singleness as the OT, but views the choice of singleness as a viable alternative to marriage for believers either by circumstances or choice.

❖ **In your mind is singleness a viable option for your life?**

Biblical Observations on Celibacy (Singleness)

There are three ways to view singleness: 1) an opportunity to glorify God in devotion and service to Christ, 2) an opportunity to serve oneself and further one's own desires, and 3) an incomplete state because only a mate can make one complete. The Scriptures speak to each of these views.

❖ How do you view singleness?

❖ For the married, how is this view manifested in your relationship with singles?

There are primarily two passages that speak on singleness: Matthew 19:10-12 and 1 Corinthians 7. One thing to note when looking at passages on singleness is that the assumption is that single believers are celibate. Non-celibate people are sexually immoral (i.e. fornicators or adulterers).

❖ Single or married, are you committed to God's moral will for you – your sanctification; that is, that you abstain from sexual immorality? (1 Thess 4: 3)

Matthew 19:10-12

Jesus has just spoken on the permanence of marriage when His disciples incredulously make this statement in verse 10: "If the relationship of the man with his wife is like this, it is better not to marry." If the marriage relationship is permanent it is better to not marry. Jesus answers with teaching on singleness.

¹¹But He said to them, "Not all men *can* accept this statement, but *only* those to whom it has been given. ¹²For 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*." Matt 19:11-12

19:11 – Not everyone can accept the permanence of marriage nor that singleness is a viable alternative to marriage. For those that cannot accept the permanence of marriage, the God honoring response is a life of celibate singleness. Singleness is not for everyone, only to those to whom it has been given. Jesus here is not saying that celibacy is superior to marriage, only that it is for "those to whom it has been given."

❖ Have you purposed to be a doer of God's word and honor Him with your choices?

19:12 – There are three kinds of people who are celibate (cannot or do not partake in sexual activity) and therefore not married.

- "Eunuchs who were born that way from their mother's womb". This describes those with congenital deformities.
- "Eunuchs who were made eunuchs by men". This describes those who have been castrated by other people for vocational or non-Christian religious reasons.
- "Eunuchs who made themselves eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of heaven". This describes those who are celibate by commitment and dedication to the Lord.

Those who are celibate must make a conscious choice to be so "for the sake of the kingdom of heaven". If a person is single, they need to make a conscious choice to maintain sexual purity and dedicate their singleness to the glory and service of Christ.

❖ What is your purpose in singleness or marriage?

1 Corinthians 7

1 Corinthians adds to the Biblical teaching on singleness. Beginning in chapter 7, Paul is addressing questions that the Corinthians asked him in their letter to him (16:17). Paul introduced each of these answers with the phrase “now concerning” (7:1, 25; 8:1; 12:1; 16:1, 12). There are two of these “now concerning” statements in chapter 7. Based on the answer to the question, we can speculate that the questions dealt with how Christian singleness and marriage are expressed in a pagan culture.

¹**Now concerning** the things about which you wrote, it is good for a man not to touch a woman. 1 Cor 7:1

²⁵**Now concerning** virgins I have no command of the Lord, but I give an opinion as one who by the mercy of the Lord is trustworthy. 1 Cor 7:25

7:1 – Celibacy (singleness) is good, honorable, and excellent. Singleness should not be seen as better than marriage, nor as second rate. Singleness is a valid alternative that has certain advantages in serving the Lord.

❖ **How do you view singleness? How does this act itself out in your life?**

7:2 – The danger of celibacy (singleness) is sexual immorality. The God honoring outlet for sexual desire is within the context of marriage.

❖ **Are you striving for sexual purity?**

7:3-6 – The husband and wife are responsible to meet the physical needs of each other. Prolonged celibacy in marriage is wrong and should only be entered in to by agreement for a time for the purpose of prayer. Celibacy in marriage can lead to sexual temptation.

❖ **Husband and wife do you serve your mate in this area?**

7:7 – Celibacy (singleness) and marriage are both gifts from God. These are not spiritual gifts, but instead the circumstances that God has for someone at a certain time.

¹⁶Do not be deceived, my beloved brethren. 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. James 1:16-17

❖ **Do you view your current marital status as a gift from God?**

7:8-9 – Celibacy (singleness) is only for those whom the Spirit has matured to have self-control over sexual desire. Paul here gives a way to evaluate if a life of celibate singleness is a viable option.

❖ **Are you yielded and bowed before God or before the master of sex?**

7:17-31 – Paul speaks of contentment in one’s present circumstances. Christians should willingly accept the situation into which God has placed them and be content to serve Him there. We should not be preoccupied with changing our outward circumstances.

❖ **Single – are you content where God has you now and committed to glorifying Him in you singleness? Or are you preoccupied with marriage?**

❖ **Married – are you content where God has you now and committed to glorifying Him in your marriage?**

7:32-35 – Celibacy (singleness) permits greater opportunity for undivided, undistracted devotion to the Lord and ministry for the Lord. Both the single and married should strive continually for increased devotion to the Lord.

²³And He was saying to them all, "**If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow Me.**"²⁴"For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake, he is the one who will save it.

²⁵"For what is a man profited if he gains the whole world, and loses or forfeits himself?

²⁶"For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words, the Son of Man will be ashamed of him when He comes in His glory, and the glory of the Father and of the holy angels. Luke 9:23-26

²⁵Now large crowds were going along with Him; and He turned and said to them, ²⁶"**If anyone comes to Me, and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be My disciple.** ²⁷**Whoever does not carry his own cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple.** ²⁸For which one of you, when he wants to build a tower, **does not first sit down and calculate the cost** to see if he has enough to complete it? ²⁹Otherwise, when he has laid a foundation and is not able to finish, all who observe it begin to ridicule him, ³⁰saying, 'This man began to build and was not able to finish.' ³¹Or what king, when he sets out to meet another king in battle, will not first sit down and consider whether he is strong enough with ten thousand *men* to encounter the one coming against him with twenty thousand? ³²Or else, while the other is still far away, he sends a delegation and asks for terms of peace. ³³So then, **none of you can be My disciple who does not give up all his own possessions.** Luke 14:15-33

- Love Jesus more than any other relationship (v26)
- Love Jesus more than your own life (v26)
- Carry your own cross – dying to self and self interest (v27)
- Follow (v27)
- Count the great cost (v28-32)
- Give up all one's possessions (what do people think they "own?") (v33)

❖ **Are you living now with undivided, undistracted devotion to the Lord?**

Living Single

1. With respect to living single, first and foremost it must be noted that God is sovereign in all things. God's sovereignty does not stop when it comes to your marriage and singleness. The purpose of God's plan is His glory (Psa 19:1; Eph 1:4-6, 11-12; Rom 9:23; Rev 4:11) and in working all things for His own glory, He causes all things to work together for the good of His children. God is causing present circumstances to be for His own glory and His child's good, even celibacy. He can be trusted to do what is good for His children.

¹¹also we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to His purpose who **works all things after the counsel of His will,** Eph1:11

²⁸And we know that **God causes all things to work together for good** to those who love God, to those who are called according to *His* purpose. Rom 8:28

❖ **Have you surrendered yourself to God's faithfulness and sovereignty?**

❖ **Are you content with your marital state?**

2. Regardless of circumstances, the believer's goal must be to glorify God. To glorify God is to show His character in our motives, thoughts, words, and deeds. We glorify God when we live in a way that those around us can see God's character in us (Exodus 33:17-23); when we display the life of Christ living through us (Gal 2:20).

³¹Whether, then, you eat or drink or whatever **you do, do all to the glory of God.**
1 Cor 10:31

²⁰I have been crucified with Christ; and **it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me;** and the *life* which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me. Gal 2:20

❖ **What is your purpose today?**

❖ **As you live your life, single or married, how do you view choices and challenges?**

3. Regardless of the circumstances, the believer must strive to walk in the Spirit (“above the line”). If the single believer has bowed before the master of discontentment and distrust of God, he or she must repent and bow instead before the Lord. As we bow before God in complete submission, we will be filled with the Spirit and the life of Christ will flow through us. We will then exhibit the fruits of the Spirit.

²²But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. ²⁴**Now those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.** ²⁵**If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit.** Gal 5:22-25

❖ **Are you walking in the Spirit? How might that change your outlook on marriage and singleness?**

4. Singles must change their question from “Why am I single?” to “For what purpose am I single?” The “why” question, questions God's goodness and faithfulness and sovereignty. The “for what purpose” question seeks to honor God in circumstances. Singleness allows greater opportunity for undivided, undistracted devotion to the Lord (1 Cor 7:32-35); for single-minded investment in service for Christ.

❖ **As a single or married person, how are you serving the Lord?**

5. Singles (all people) must learn contentment. We must go through life not just thinking that everything we have is much more than we deserve, but that everything God has given us is exactly what is perfect for His glory and our good.

¹¹Not that I speak from want, for **I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances I am.** ¹²I know how to get along with humble means, and I also know how to live in prosperity; in any and every circumstance I have learned the secret of being filled and going hungry, both of having abundance and suffering need. ¹³**I can do all things through Him who strengthens me.** Phil 4:11-13

³**The steadfast of mind You will keep in perfect peace, Because he trusts in You.** ⁴Trust in the Lord forever, For in God the Lord, *we have* an everlasting Rock. Isa 26:3-4

❖ **Do you go through life not satisfied with what God has given you?**

6. Singles (and all people) must seek a more intimate relationship with God and chose to not be concerned about temporal things.

²⁵“For this reason I say to you, **do not be worried about your life**, *as to* what you will eat or what you will drink; nor for your body, *as to* what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? ²⁶Look at the birds of the air, that they do not sow, nor reap nor gather into barns, and *yet* your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not worth much more than they? ²⁷And who of you by being worried can add a *single* hour to his life? ²⁸And why are you worried about clothing? Observe how the lilies of the field grow; they do not toil nor do they spin, ²⁹yet I say to you that not even Solomon in all his glory clothed himself like one of these. ³⁰But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which is *alive* today and tomorrow is thrown into the furnace, *will He* not much more *clothe* you? You of little faith! ³¹Do not worry then, saying, ‘What will we eat?’ or ‘What will we drink?’ or ‘What will we wear for clothing?’ ³²For the Gentiles eagerly seek all these things; for your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. ³³**But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.** ³⁴“So do not worry about tomorrow; for tomorrow will care for itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own. Matt 6:25-34

¹⁵As for me, I shall behold Your face in righteousness; **I will be satisfied with Your likeness when I awake.** Psa 17:15

⁵My soul, wait in silence for God only, For my hope is from Him. ⁶He only is my rock and my salvation, My stronghold; I shall not be shaken. ⁷On God my salvation and my glory *rest*; The rock of my strength, my refuge is in God. ⁸Trust in Him at all times, O people; Pour out your heart before Him; God is a refuge for us. Psa 62:5-8

¹Therefore if you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. ²Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth. ³For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God. Col 3:1-3

❖ **What do you seek first?**

❖ **With what do you satisfy yourself?**

7. God provides for the companionship of singles.

²⁹Jesus said, “Truly I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or farms, for My sake and for the gospel’s sake, ³⁰but that he will receive a hundred times as much now in the present age, houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and farms, along with persecutions; and in the age to come, eternal life. Mark 10:29-30

❖ **Single – are you availing yourself of the deep Christian companionship within the body of Christ?**

❖ **Married – are you extending yourself in love to your single Christian brother or sister?**

Concluding Thoughts

No matter what our situation, a believer in Jesus Christ is not there by themselves. God is there, working all things for His glory and our good. As we seek to honor the Lord, bowing before the Him, submitting ourselves to His Word, filled with the Spirit, we must strive for contentment.

Real Life Scenarios

Yourself #1: You are just about to turn 30. Most of your friends have found their “soul mate”, but not you. You find that you yearn to be married; to have what others have in marriage. You don’t understand why God hasn’t given you a mate yet, after all, He wants you to be happy. What thoughts here are lies? What heart motives must be put off and areas of obedience put on? What responses in this situation would honor God?

Yourself #2: You are nearing forty and have never been married. Most Sundays at church, well meaning people say things to you like: “Isn’t it about time you settled down and had a family.” or “Your biological clock is almost run out, you better get married soon.” or they hand you magazine ads about dating services for Christians or they offer to set you up with a Christian who is a “great catch”. You go home each week dejected, thinking you have somehow missed God’s plan for your life. What thoughts here are lies? What responses in this situation would honor God? What would be a God honoring response to your church-mates in a teachable moment?

Someone Else: You are picking up your kids at AWANA; walking up hand-in-hand with your husband. A haggard, single mom is picking up her two kids, one in Cubbies and one in Sparks. You sit down on the planter by her and strike up a conversation. She tells you how sad, tired, and lonely she is and how much she wishes that God would bless her with a husband. You ask her out for coffee. As you begin to care for this dear sister, what is the most important thing that you need to know? What truths might you begin to share with her? What other care might you offer?

Biblical Solutions for Life Issues
Topic 27 – Singleness – Additional Study

Read Matthew 19:3-12 and 1 Corinthians 7. List the reasons for and blessings of singleness.

Read 2 Peter 1:3-4 and brainstorm what God has given you for life and godliness as a single person.

Brainstorm a list of ways you can glorify God in your singleness.

Read Philippians 4.

Are you anxious about being single? What is God's solution for anxiousness?

Are you content in your singleness? What are some ways you can put off discontentment and put on contentment.