

**Single Advantage:  
The Value of Being Unmarried  
1 Corinthians 7:6-9, 25-40**

## **Introduction**

In recent weeks we've talked a lot about marriage. It is good for us to do so and to value marriage highly, especially in a day when many berate it and promote practices that undermine it. The first man and woman were married. Their marriage was key to filling the earth and subduing it in accord with the creation mandate. After the fall, even though sin made it more difficult, their marriage was tied to redemption, for the offspring of the woman would crush the serpent's head.

With such emphasis on the design and purpose of marriage, we might draw the false conclusion that being unmarried is somehow less valuable, unfulfilling, and lacking the divine purpose marriage enjoys.

Tony Reinke, *12 Ways Your Phone Is Changing You*, 48-49.

"Marriage and singleness are both profound gifts. Marriage affirms the goodness of creation, projects a beautiful metaphor of Christ's love for his church, and anticipates a cosmic marriage to come. Singleness, on the other hand, points our attention back to the

beautiful life of Christ on earth and forward to the majesty of our soon-coming moment of personal glorification. . . . Christ pictures a singleness so profound and regal that all earthly singleness finds transcendent urgency and unquestionable dignity.”

1 Corinthians 7:6-9

<sup>6</sup> Now as a concession, not a command, I say this. <sup>7</sup> I wish that all were as I myself am. But each has his own gift from God, one of one kind and one of another. <sup>8</sup> To the unmarried and the widows I say that it is good for them to remain single, as I am. <sup>9</sup> But if they cannot exercise self-control, they should marry. For it is better to marry than to burn with passion.

Unmarried

Widows

Single

Even this range of terms reminds us that *all of us will spend a significant portion of our lives as unmarried people*. Even if we get married, we live typically two-three decades before we do so and half the married people in the room will live another decade or more as single again, either because of death or divorce. Some of us in the church family will serve God as singles the whole time.

Both marriage and singleness are gifts from God with divine purpose.

Paul is single when he write this, and thinks it is better for his present circumstances.

Jesus was single, and He is the perfect human being. You cannot look at Jesus and come away with the notion that being single cuts you off from fulfillment and purpose.

1 Corinthians 7:25-31

<sup>25</sup> Now concerning the betrothed, I have no command from the Lord, but I give my judgment as one who by the Lord's mercy is trustworthy. <sup>26</sup> I think that in view of the present distress it is good for a person to remain as he is. <sup>27</sup> Are you bound to a wife? Do not seek to be free. Are you free from a wife? Do not seek a wife. <sup>28</sup> But if you do marry, you have not sinned, and if a betrothed woman marries, she has not sinned. Yet those who marry will have worldly troubles, and I would spare you that. <sup>29</sup> This is what I mean, brothers: the appointed time has grown very short. From now on, let those who have wives live as though they had none, <sup>30</sup> and those who mourn as though they were not mourning, and those who rejoice as though they were not rejoicing, and those who buy as though they had no goods, <sup>31</sup> and those who deal with the world as though they had no dealings with it. For the present form of this world is passing away.

*Our happiness and fulfillment cannot be dependent on whatever our marital status is. Contentment in Christ is key, whether I am married or single.* If you are unmarried, do not think that getting married will bring you ultimate satisfaction. If you are married, your spouse cannot fully satisfy your heart. Only Jesus can do that.

John 6:35

I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst.

*Both married and unmarried people have troubles and frustrations.* Sometimes they envy each other because the troubles can be of different. There are all kinds of variety among those who make up the body of Christ. We live in a broken world that is passing away. Even in the area of sexuality that Paul addresses in the first five verses, many married people suffer frustration and in some ways have fewer options open to them to resolve it than the unmarried do.

*But both married and unmarried people have opportunity to serve the Lord.* Unmarried persons have fewer distractions from doing so, and even those married to unbelievers have a holy purpose to fulfill. 1 Corinthians 7 teaches us to serve God in whatever social status we are in.

**32** I want you to be free from anxieties. The unmarried man is anxious about the things of the Lord, how to please the Lord. **33** But the married man is anxious about worldly things, how to please his wife, **34** and his interests are divided. And the unmarried or betrothed woman is anxious about the things of the Lord, how to be holy in body and spirit. But the married woman is anxious about worldly things, how to please her husband. **35** I say this for your own benefit, not to lay any restraint upon you, but to promote good order and to secure your undivided devotion to the Lord.

**36** If anyone thinks that he is not behaving properly toward his betrothed, if his passions are strong, and it has to be, let him do as he wishes: let them marry—it is no sin. **37** But whoever is firmly established in his heart, being under no necessity but having his desire under control, and has determined this in his heart, to keep her as his betrothed, he will do well. **38** So then he who marries his betrothed does well, and he who refrains from marriage will do even better.

**39** A wife is bound to her husband as long as he lives. But if her husband dies, she is free to be married to whom she wishes, only in the Lord. **40** Yet in my judgment she is happier if she remains as she is. And I think that I too have the Spirit of God.

*The advantage of being single is a life of undistracted devotion to the Lord. More flexibility, fewer people you're responsible for. The disadvantage can be isolation and loneliness.*

Recognize that mutually edifying relationships can and do and must exist apart from marriage. The church body—brothers and sisters in Christ. Critical that married couples not isolate themselves every bit as much as singles not do so. Married people experience isolation and loneliness too. We all need one another. Important for us to build relationships that blend married and unmarried people. Not making another person your project. I've seen married people trying to set up a single person, as if the person can't possibly be fulfilled unless he/she gets married. A single person can do the same thing. Nobody likes to be someone else's project. It devalues us as image bearers. We all should be helping one another according to our gifts, but from love and affection for our forever family, not seeing ourselves as some kind of savior or project manager.

*Experiencing close friendship is at the core our created identity and is a chief blessing of Christ's redemptive work. The loneliness we feel is both part of who we are as humans created in God's image and also a painful*

effect of the fall, which produced alienation and isolation.

Hunter, 64: "The first problem in human history, the first problem on the pages of Scripture, the first problem in any human life, was not sin—it was solitude."

Keller, quoted by Hunter, 65: "The ache for friends is the one ache that is not the result of sin. . . . This is one ache that is part of his perfection. . . . God made us in such a way that we cannot enjoy paradise without friends. God made us in such a way that we cannot enjoy our joy without human friends."

Eve met Adam's need not just as a wife but as a companion, a friend. She was the necessary link to filling the earth with community.

*Human beings made in the image of God are made for love and friendship, because God is love. God is Three in One in everlasting relationship.*

*True godliness expresses itself in loving community.* All that the law and the prophets commanded hang on two great commands: Love God supremely. Love your neighbor as yourself.

John 17:20-23

**20** "I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word, **21** that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me. **22** The glory that you have given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one, **23** I in them and you in me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that you sent me and loved them even as you loved me.

"Today is a day of iPhones and iPads, iTunes and—let's just say—the whole i-life. But is there any space in the i-life for the we-life of Christianity? At the heart of Christianity is God's desire for a people to display his character. They do this through their obedience to his Word in their relationships with him and with each other." Mark Dever, *Discipling*, 12.