

Single (or Married) and Satisfied

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Text: 1 Corinthians 7:25-40

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Introduction: Open your Bible to the book of **1 Corinthians 7:25-40**. The title of this morning's message is "Single (or Married) and Satisfied". We are continuing in our series on the Home through the book of Ephesians. We are in chapter 5. Paul does not address singleness in Ephesians, but he does in 1 Corinthians 7, so we are going to look over there this morning.

In the late 1800s the Ladies' Home Journal invited a group of single people to write poems about singleness. They are quite interesting. Here's one from one man:

Of all the girls that ever I knew
I never saw one I thought would do.
I wanted a wife that was nice and neat,
Who's up-to-date and had small feet.
I wanted a wife that was loving and kind,
And that hadn't too much an independent mind.
I wanted a wife that could cook and sew
And wasn't eternally on the go.
I wanted a wife that was strikingly beautiful,
Intelligent, rich, and exceedingly dutiful.
That isn't so much to demand in a wife,
but she's still not found though I've looked all my life.

"Now concerning virgins I have no commandment of the Lord: yet I give my judgment, as one that hath obtained mercy of the Lord to be faithful. 26 I suppose therefore that this is good for the present distress, I say, that *it is* good for a man so to be. 27 Art thou bound unto a wife? seek not to be loosed. Art thou loosed from a wife? seek not a wife. 28 But and if thou marry, thou hast not sinned; and if a virgin marry, she hath not sinned. Nevertheless such shall have trouble in the flesh: but I spare you. 29 But this I say, brethren, the time *is* short: it remaineth, that both they that have wives be as though they had none; 30 And they that weep, as though they wept not; and they that rejoice, as though they rejoiced not; and they that buy, as though they possessed not; 31 And they that use this world, as not abusing *it*: for the fashion of this world passeth away. 32 But I would have you without carefulness. He that is unmarried [**SINGLE**] careth for the things that belong to the Lord, how he may please the Lord: 33 But he that is married careth for the things that are of the world, how he may please *his* wife. 34 There is difference *also* between a wife and a virgin. The unmarried woman careth for the things of the Lord, that she may be holy both in body and in spirit: but she that is married careth for the things of the world, how she may please *her* husband. 35 And this I speak for your own profit; not that I may cast a snare upon you, but for that which is comely, and that ye may attend upon the Lord without distraction".

[Prayer for Guidance]

In **1 Corinthians 7**, Paul covers some of the challenges of being married, and he covers how to be single and satisfied. In **verses 25-35**, he gives:

- 1 consideration—how to be single and satisfied!
- 2 foundations of singleness
- 3 protections for being single

Before we get to that, let me tell you about the inspired apostle writing this letter.

Paul's background: Paul was the right person to tackle the issue of singleness, because the evidence suggests Paul had probably been married, and then became a widower early on in his life. How do we know this? Historians tell us that Paul must have been married because before his conversion he was very likely a member of the Sanhedrin, the supreme council of Jewish leaders, which required its members to be married.¹ He refers to himself being a widower in **1 Corinthians 7:8**, "I say therefore to the unmarried and widows, It is good for them if they abide even as I." The word "unmarried" in context is probably referring to widowers.

- I. First let's consider the one **Consideration**: How can you be single and satisfied? Whether single or married, you must find your satisfaction in the Lord.
- II. Let's look at the two **Foundations** for singleness.

A. First, realize that singleness is a **GIFT** of God. God is sovereign. Paul says in **verse 7**, "I would that all men were even as I myself. But every man hath his proper gift of God, one after this manner, and another after that".

Whether you are married or single, God has given you your present status. If you are single, you do not ask the question "Lord, why have you not given me a spouse?" If you are married, you do not ask, "Lord, why have you given me this spouse?!" The question you should ask is, "God how can you use me right where I am?" He is sovereign. If He wants you married, He's the greatest matchmaker in the universe. If He wants you single, He alone will satisfy you. And by the way, no spouse will ever satisfy you. God alone satisfies.

So we see that singleness is a gift. Paul says that God gifts some people within the Body of Christ to withstand sexual desire for the sake of being totally focused on advancing His kingdom.

Consider Jesus' words in **Matthew 19:12**. Here he names three categories of single people: "For there are some eunuchs, which were so born from their mother's womb: and there are some eunuchs, which were made eunuchs of men: and there be eunuchs, which have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake. He that is able to receive it, let him receive it."

Jim Elliot, the missionary martyr to the Auca Indians put himself in the last category. He was ready to renounce marriage in order to obey God, and he did just that. Before he left for Ecuador as a missionary he told the girl he was in love with that he had given her up to God.² He was able to be single

¹ Frederic William Farrar. *The Life and Work of St. Paul* (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1889), 45.

² Elisabeth Elliot. *Passion and Purity* (Grand Rapids, MI: Revell, 2006), 55.

for the Kingdom of God. (Later on he did marry, but he was able to put his life in a holding pattern and remain pure for the cause of Christ.)

Paul, though he may have been a widower, chose to remain single for the Kingdom of God. He says in **verse 7**, "I would that all men were even as I myself. But every man hath his proper gift of God". Singleness and marriage are both gifts. Seek how you can be used of God in the state that you are in right now.

If Paul was married, it is clear that God chose to change his state of marriage and gave him the gift of being a widower and single. Others can't imagine ever marrying, but God may choose to give them marriage.

B. Second, God tells us that singleness is **GOOD**—it is to be preferred above marriage. **1 Corinthians 7:1**, "It is good for a man not to touch a woman." The word "touch" refers to marital intimacy. Paul was saying, it is good for a person to remain single. In **verse 26**, he speaks of single people as "virgins" and he says "it is good for a man so to be [REMAIN AS HE IS]". The idea here is it is good to remain as you are. Paul again encourages people to remain single in **verse 8**. Listen to his words: "I say therefore to the unmarried and widows, It is good for them if they abide even as I." Paul says it is good for a man or a woman to remain single and not marry. We will look at his reasons in a moment, but for now he says, it is a preferred status.

III. Three **Protections** for singleness. We need to wait on the Lord, work for the Lord, and be wedded only in the Lord. The first protection is this:

A. If you are single, you need to **WAIT** on the Lord.

David said in **Psalm 27:14**, "Wait on the LORD: be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart: wait, I say, on the LORD."

Patient waiting does not come naturally to most of us, but God speaks of it often in the Bible. One of the most important disciplines of the Christian life is to learn to trust God. How do you need to wait if you are single?

1. First, wait in **moral purity**. This is a protection for your **body**. If you are single, you must remain morally pure. Notice the word Paul uses in **1 Corinthians 7:25** is "virgins". If you are single and you love the Lord, then you are also celibate. You are keeping yourself morally pure.

a. The **duration** of your purity. How long must you be morally pure? Until God gives you a spouse, and then you are to enjoy the purity of marital intimacy. Marriage is the only relationship in which sexual intimacy can take place at all. Paul says in **verses 8-9**, "It is good for them if they abide even as I [as a single person]. 9 But if they cannot contain, let them marry: for it is better to marry than to burn." He says the same thing in **verse 1**, Paul says "It is good for a man not to touch a woman." It is good to remain single. Yet Paul says in **verse 2**, "Nevertheless, to avoid fornication, let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband".

b. The **deceit** that rises as you try to guard your purity. Sometimes the wait is so difficult for some in singleness, that they make excuses in

order to compromise their purity. Let me say that if you are single, you are to remain a virgin! There is no exception to this. If you cannot control yourself, you are to get married.

Application: Let me give a word about engaged couples. What does Paul teach here for engaged couples? He has already taught that singleness is to be preferred, but that if sexual desire is strong . . . what? Go ahead and sleep together since you are committed to each other? No! He says, if the desire is that strong, get married. Premarital sexual intercourse for engaged couples is not a Christian option. God calls it fornication, and you are to abstain from it.

1 Thessalonians 4:3, "For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication".

- c. The **preciousness** of your purity. Your purity is priceless. You are to remain pure from sexual immorality and fornication. Your purity is not a cheap thing to be tossed around like a drive through at fast food restaurant. If something is valuable, you protect it. Make your purity a priority.

Now I want you to understand that sex is a holy thing, but it is reserved for marriage alone.

Within marriage, God calls intimacy good and honorable. **Hebrews 13:4**, "Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed [KOITUS-marital intimacy] undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge." Marriage is the only relationship in which sexual intimacy can take place at all, and it is a holy picture of Christ and the church. Marital intimacy is just as holy as praying, reading the Bible, preparing a message, preaching, tithing, praying with someone about his soul, teaching a Sunday school class.

Now, as a single person, you must reserve yourself for the Lord. You must guard yourself from giving away your purity.

2. Second, wait with the right **mentality** (**verse 26**, "I suppose therefore that this is good for the present distress, I say, that **it is good for a man so to be.**"). There are both positives and negatives to marriage and to singleness. Paul lays out the good things for singleness here. He says it is good. That is what you need to focus your mind on. This is a protection for your **mind**. When I was a Senior in college, I remember all my friends got what we called "senioritis". It's a devastating disease of discontentment. My friends wanted to get married. That's all they were focused on. They felt like if they didn't make it happen that year, it wasn't going to happen. Paul says in **verse 26** that we should not let our marital status dominate our thinking and focus. He says "I suppose therefore that this is good for the present distress, I say, that **it is good for a man so to be.**" You were made to serve the Lord. Use your singleness or your marriage to serve the Lord.

Anyone who thinks marriage is the be-all and end-all of life, the answer to all of a single person's dreams and problems, is in for a big letdown. Marriage is wonderful, but someone likened it to flies on a window screen.

"Some are on the outside wanting in, and others are on the inside wanting out."³ Paul says it very plainly in **verse 27**, "Art thou bound unto a wife? seek not to be loosed. Art thou loosed from a wife? seek not a wife."

You see, marriage is not an automatic fix for all the needs of single people. In fact, all the problems you have right now would be compounded in marriage because no one has ever married a sinlessly perfect person. The only people available for marriage are sinners. They may be saved by grace, but if you looked in the mirror this morning you realize you are not perfect yet!

Don't make your marital status an idol. If you are single, serve the Lord. A marriage will not make you more holy or spiritual. If you are married, you are in an imperfect marriage. You ought never wish to get out of it. Whether you are single or married, you ought to use your status to serve Christ!

3. Third, wait with a view of your **mortality (verses 29, 31)**. This life is a vapour that is quickly passing away! This is a protection for your **soul**. All this marriage stuff is temporal. There will be no marriage or giving in marriage in heaven. Paul says, "But this I say, brethren, the time is short: it remaineth, that both they that have wives be as though they had none". He says in **verse 31**, "And they that use this world, as not abusing it: for the fashion of this world passeth away".

Consider **Matthew 22:23-30**. Some religious leaders among the Jews who did not believe in a resurrection or even life after death. They came to Jesus with a question they thought He could never answer. Look at **Matthew 22:23**, "The same day came to him the Sadducees, which say that there is no resurrection, and asked him, 24 Saying, Master, Moses said, If a man die, having no children, his brother shall marry his wife, and raise up seed unto his brother. 25 Now there were with us seven brethren: and the first, when he had married a wife, deceased, and, having no issue, left his wife unto his brother: 26 Likewise the second also, and the third, unto the seventh. 27 And last of all the woman died also. 28 Therefore in the resurrection whose wife shall she be of the seven? for they all had her. 29 Jesus answered and said unto them, Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God. 30 For in the resurrection they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God in heaven."

As you wait on Christ, remember marriage is not utilized in heaven.

Marriage is something that is going to pass away. Marriage is designed in this life to be a Gospel tract of Christ and His church, and it is also designed to sanctify the couple. As a single person, you need to understand that marriage will attach you to the things of this world. This world is passing away. It is God's design that we have a very light attachment to earthly things.

³Tony Evans: *Tony Evans Speaks Out on Being Single & Satisfied* (Chicago, IL : Moody Press, 2002), 16.

Paul gives four areas of life that changing, so we ought not put our focus on them.

1. ***Don't get too caught up thinking about Marriage. Verse 29***, 'But this I say, brethren, the time is short: it remaineth, that both they that have wives be as though they had none'.
2. ***Don't get too caught up thinking about Emotions. Verse 30a***, "And they that weep, as though they wept not; and they that rejoice, as though they rejoiced not" Emotions are constantly changing. Your emotions are not your spirituality. Your walk with the Lord and service for Him is most important.
3. ***Don't get too caught up thinking about Possessions. Verse 30b***, "and they that buy, as though they possessed not;" You know these possessions are passing away. Don't get caught up in materialism. Live simply.
4. ***Don't get too caught up thinking about Pleasure. Verse 31***, "And they that use this world, as not abusing it: for the fashion of this world passeth away." Yes, there are many good gifts that come from the Father of lights. They are to be enjoyed, but they are not the focus. Wait on the Lord with a view toward your mortality. This life is a vapour that is quickly passing away!

Transition: No matter what you do, or what your status in life is, wait on the Lord. We are called to wait on God's timing for everything. What we need to be waiting on is not the right person to come along, but waiting on the Lord for His will. Are you ready? He could come back at any time. This world is passing away. Are you using your singleness or your marriage for Christ? ***So the first protection is to WAIT on the LORD!!***

Conclusion: The next two protections are to WORK for the Lord and be WEDDED in the Lord, but that will have to wait until next week. Next week we will talk about bring "single and safe", but for now, remember to wait on the Lord and be satisfied with His way. Whether you are single or married, your satisfaction comes from Christ! Marriage never made any one happier than they were already in Christ. No mate is better than Christ. If you are able to be single for the Kingdom's sake you should! It is BETTER!! Whatever your station in life, SERVE THE LORD!!