

What If I'm Single? 1 Cor 7:1-2, 6-9, 25-40

1 Cor 7; Been working our way thru a marriage series titled – Happy To Be Stuck W/ You

Talking about what it is, why it exists, how it should be, and so on

But there's one area that we haven't covered, and that's being single

A stage of life common to all of us, but often overlooked and undervalued (**Intro**)

Let's face it – sometimes there's a stigma associated with being single

“There must be something wrong with me”

“There must be something wrong with them”

And the result is that singles sometimes see themselves for less than who they are . . .

And those who are married often overlook them altogether

So let's just set the record straight from the start – single does not mean second-class

Nor does it mean you're sub-par

Far too many singles are walking around thinking their life doesn't start, and they can't

do anything of any significance, until/unless they get married

And nothing could be further from the truth

Some of the most influential people in the world have been single; Like . . .

Beethoven – one of the most brilliant composers of all time

Sir Isaac Newton – the father of modern science

Alfred Nobel – the inventor of dynamite

Queen Elizabeth I – who was instrumental in shaping the Great Britain we know today

Susan B. Anthony – the famous social reformer of the 19th century

Joan of Arc – who at age 17 led the French in victory at the Battle of Orleans

And then there's church history with the likes of . . .

Amy Carmichael and Rachael Saint – dedicated missionaries

Dietrich Bonhoeffer – the German martyr who opposed Hitler

C.S. Lewis – the famous Christian writer of the 20th century, who was a bachelor until

he married at 57, only to have his wife die 4 years later

John Stott – the famous British theologian and author; Mother Theresa

And that doesn't include the pillars of our faith like . . .

Elijah, Elisha, Jeremiah, Daniel, John the Baptist, Paul, and of course, Jesus

Single does not mean second-class, or sub-par

Which Paul makes clear here in 1 Cor 7 (v1-2)

1 – he wastes no time in saying that it's good to be single and celibate

But he immediately makes a concession for those who are unable to live up to it

Those who are unable to avoid the temptation of sex

Saying that each man should have his own wife, and vice versa

A clear indicator by the way, that though polygamy was *tolerated* by God in the OT, it's

wrong; that's not his intent

But the main point in these verses, and the first answer to our question, “What if I'm single?” is . . .

Stay pure (v1-2)

B/c celibacy, or abstaining from sex when you're single, is good

Not only is that one of the implications of v1 . . .

But Paul says so explicitly in **1 Thess 4:3-5** – *This is the will of God, your*

sanctification: that you abstain from sexual immorality; that each one of you know how to control his own body in holiness and honor, not in the passion of lust like the Gentiles who do not know God; [like those who are unsaved]

IOW, fornication, sex outside of marriage, sex between 2 people who are not married in God's eyes – is wrong

The operative phrase being – in God's eyes

Which is easy to see when it comes to heterosexual relationships

But let me be clear re homosexual relationships lest you think something contrary to what God thinks

Just b/c the Iowa State Supreme Court sanctions the union of homosexuals and *calls* it marriage, doesn't make it a marriage in God's eyes

It's still wrong; Sin by any other name, is still sin

Whether it's two consenting heterosexuals, or two consenting homosexuals

Sex outside of marriage in God's eyes, is wrong

- And while this isn't *just* an issue for those who are single, single people often have a more difficult time with it, b/c they have no sexual outlet *in* marriage
Made even more difficult for those who are younger – with hormones, youthful lusts, and the promiscuity of their peers

But staying pure when you're single is not only God's will for your life as we find here in 1 Thess 4, but as Paul says in 1 Cor 7, it's good

It's one the ways in which you ought to live and please the Lord (**end slide**)

If you're single, stay pure – that's answer number 1

- He goes on in v3-5 to talk about sexual rights in marriage, which we covered previously
And then says in v6 . . .
6 – *this* – referring to his instruction in v2 that *each man should have his own wife, and each woman her own husband*
It's a concession – you don't *have* to get married

In fact, being single has its advantages, otherwise Paul wouldn't say in v7 – *I wish that all were as I myself am.*

Implying that there are benefits to being single; which he comes to later (v7b)

7b – meaning that while it's *good* to be single, it's not for everybody

Some have the gift of being *single* and happy, while others have the gift of being *married* and happy

A gift being a God-given inclination/ability, to excel in a certain area of life/ministry

That's a spiritual gift in the NT

And while Paul wishes that we were all single like him, he makes it clear that not everybody is wired that way

Nor does it make you better, or more spiritual, one way or another

Both are God-given *gifts* that enable us to lead the lives to which we're assigned

Then, in v8-9 he explains himself a bit more (v8-9)

8-9 – If you’re single and content – stay that way; It’s good
If not, pursue marriage
Why? B/c out-of-control sexual desires are a distraction at best, and sinful at worst

But the key in all of this, is discerning your gift

Discern your gift (v6-9)

- If you’re content to be single, then chances are God has wired you that way
Or at least he has wired you to be *able* to be single
So, “Am I content?” is the first question to ask yourself in order to discern your gift
Am I content to be single? To remain unmarried?

- The second question would be – Am I lonely?
A question you cannot accurately answer by the way, if you sit at home waiting for a damsel in distress to call, or a knight in shining armor to ride through your door
You can’t answer that question accurately if you avoid the companionship of other brothers and sisters in Christ, found in the church
Anyone but a hermit would be lonely in that scenario

Not only that, but if you’re not growing in your relationship with Jesus, you’ll always be wanting for companionship – married or not
Only God can satisfy your deepest longings that way

So in order to best answer the question and discern your gift . . .
You must be in fellowship with the Lord
And you must be in fellowship with his people

That being the case – if you still yearn for companionship . . .
If you’re still lonely/aching to share your life with someone on a more intimate basis . . .
Chances are you’re not wired to be single
But you’ll never really know for sure, until you cultivate healthy relationships in the body of Christ, over a long period of time

- Are you content, and are you lonely?
2 questions to help you discern your gift when it comes to being single

And if you have it, embrace it
Discern your gift, and then embrace it for what it is – a gift
Given to u by the *Giver* of gifts – *each has his own gift from God* (7)
And the time has come to see it that way

Now, at this point u might be thinking – Okay, but what if I’m single and it’s *not* my gift?
What if I’m single and want to be married?
What do *I* do? Do I resign myself to a miserable life of discontent and loneliness?
No; But your happiness does come down to a *choice* on your part

A choice first of all to . . .

1. Be holy

If you’re a child of God, you’re called to holiness before you’re called to anything else, marriage or otherwise
Consecrate yourselves God said, and *be holy for I am holy* (Lev 11:44)

Far more than staying pure outwardly, this speaks of staying pure inwardly as well
That’s the first principle to follow if you’re single and *want* to be married – be holy

2. Be focused

Fix your eyes on Jesus, and keep them there; Seek the kingdom of God *first*
Focus on your relationship w/ the Lord first
And live for One before you ever *think* about living for another
One of the best ways to find a spouse is to pursue God and see who’s following
To focus on him and see who’s focused on you

3. Be content

B/c godliness with contentment equals great gain (1 Tim 6:6)
The gain may or may not be marriage, but there will be gain
And the fact is, if you’re not content with what you have, you’ll never be content with what you want
There are plenty of marriages that bear that out
Learn contentment now, b/c marriage doesn’t make it any easier

4. Be discerning

It’s okay to want to be married, but it’s not okay to compromise your convictions to do so
Better to be single and frustrated, than married and miserable
B/c once you’re married, there’s no going back
That doesn’t mean sit around and do nothing – some of you need to act on your desire
Invite someone to coffee; Get to know some other believers

But whatever u do, when it comes to a spouse, be discerning and look for a Ps 15 person
Someone – who’s saved, filled with integrity, treats others well, shows good judgment, keeps their word, and extends compassion
Be discerning and look for a spouse like that if you’re single and *want* to be married

5. Be patient

Psalms 37:7 – Be still before the LORD and wait patiently for him
Will he bring a spouse into your life? I don’t know, and neither do you
But I do know that he wants you to be patient . . .
Focused on *him*, *content* in your heart, *holy* in your life, and *discerning* in your mind
If you’re single and want to be married, do that, and you won’t go wrong

And no matter who you are – whether single/gifted, or single/wanting to be married . . .

Take advantage of it (v25-40)

If you’re single – take advantage of it
That’s what he gets at in v25-40, after talking about marriage and divorce in v10-16, and then salvation and its implications for our lives in v17-24 (v25)

25 – I have no direct teaching from Jesus on this, but I do have some counsel that I would commend to you (v26-27)

26-27 – given the context of the previous paragraph, he’s most likely speaking to those who have just come to Christ

And he’s saying that just b/c you’re a child of God now, doesn’t mean you should get a divorce; Nor does it mean you should get married

It’s good to remain as you are (v28)

28 – zeroing in on singles, he says if you do get married, it’s not a sin; it’s okay
But realize that hardship awaits – there will be stresses and strains and trials
The very thing from which he’s trying to spare us – so take advantage of it

- IOW, take advantage of the *peace* that comes with being single
The lack of strife, the lack of stress, the lack of worry – take advantage of that
It’s better if u don’t have those burdens; It’s better if u don’t have those troubles (v29a)

29a – the appointed time of Christ’s return
And if it was short then, it’s even shorter now (v29b-31)

29b-31 – the door is closing on the opp to fulfill Christ’s mandate to spread the word,
build the church, advance the kingdom, and reach the lost – time is short
So don’t get so caught up in the cares of the world that you forget or neglect what’s
most important

Don’t let your emotions (*mourning* or *rejoicing*) keep you fr being effective for the Lord
Don’t let your marriage cloud your perspective
And don’t let the things you own/*buy*, or the things you do (your *dealings* in the world),
rule the day and divert your focus from the things of God
Good things (including marriage) become bad things when they displace the best things
So *set your mind on things that are above, not on things that are on the earth.* (Col 3:2)

All of which is easier to do if you’re *not* married – it’s one less thing to think about
So take advantage of it; and . . .

- Take advantage of the *time* you have (v32-34)
- 32-34 – marriage does not prevent great devotion to the Lord, nor does singleness
guarantee it
But Paul’s point here is that it’s certainly easier for a single person to be devoted to the
Lord, b/c their *responsibilities* are singular
While a married person’s interests/responsibilities are by necessity, divided – they’re
trying to please both their spouse *and* the Lord, and rightly so (v35a)

35a – *this* – referring to his warnings about marriage and his desire that we be free from
anxieties

35b – *undivided devotion* – that is the thrust of this entire chapter
That we would be unhindered and unfettered when it comes to our love and allegiance
to Jesus Christ
And those who are single have a greater degree of freedom to do so, than those who are
married
So take advantage of it

Take advantage of your *peace*, take advantage of your *time*, and . . .

- Take advantage of your *freedom*
Your lack of distraction in serving the Lord

I wish that more of you who are single would *pour* yourselves into ministry
You have a unique opp that those of us who are married do not have
Our interests are divided – we *can’t* fully devote ourselves to ministry; you *can*

You can spend and be spent *exclusively* on the family of God, while we have to spend
and be spent on God’s family *and* our own
And there’s only so much to go around

I wish that more of you would stop wishing you weren’t single, and start blessing others
while you are
That you would start taking *full* advantage of the stage of life in which you find yourself
I wish that more of you would . . . Give extravagantly
Immerse yourself in people’s lives
Model a sold-out, *undivided devotion* to the Lord that makes others want to follow

Some of you are exemplary in this, but many of you aren’t
And the time has come for you to take advantage of your singleness and the freedom it
affords, and serve the Lord
We need you! We need you in the body of Christ (v36-38)

36-38 – it’s not wrong to get married, and if you do, you do well
Or as some versions say, it’s not wrong to let your daughter get married – either way the
principle is the same
If your passions are in check and your convictions strong, you *do even better* to remain
single
You stand to benefit fr the peace, the time, and the freedom you would otherwise miss
If you’re single – take advantage of it

Having said all that, he wraps up by addressing widows and widowers (v39)

39 – in addressing this specific situation, he confirms 3 general truths about marriage

1. It’s for life
2. Don’t be unequally yoked – marry a believer; someone *in the Lord*
3. Marry someone you *want* to marry – *she is free to be married to whom she wishes*
Which calls into question the wisdom of pre-arranged marriages if one of the parties
doesn’t want to have anything to do with the other (v40)

40 – if your heart’s not totally in it, you might think twice about getting re-married
B/c Paul thinks you’d be happier single
And he’s not saying this of his own accord, but as one who is under the influence and
inspiration of the HS (**Summary slide**)

- Single does not mean second-class, or damaged, or sub-par
In fact, if you’re single, you have a unique opp to serve the Lord with undivided
devotion, and the responsibility to make the most of it
Take advantage of it