

The Advantages of Being Single – 1 Cor 7:25-40

1 Cor 7:25-40; I'm thankful for our time away last week – it was good to be with family
I trust you experienced the same with your Thanksgiving
I'm also thankful for John Walters, our Children's Pastor, who preached in my absence

But I'm eager to continue our mini-series on marriage here in 1 Cor 7, which is why we're going to focus on v25-40 today . . .

And then go back and pick up v17-24 next week, which is more of a *general* commentary on our freedom in Christ; That's next weekend

- But this weekend the issue is singleness
Or more specifically, the *advantages* of being single
That's what Paul's getting at here in v25-40

Something that's lost on many, and squandered by most

In fact, most people think being single is a huge *disadvantage* in life – especially when compared to being married; And nothing could be further from the truth

B/c Paul says in v8 – *To the unmarried and the widows I say that it is good for them to remain single as I am.*

It's good; Being single is good

And in v38 – *He who marries his betrothed [the one to whom he's engaged] does well, and he who refrains from marriage will do even better.*

Implying that there are advantages to being single

The first of which, from v25-28, is that . . .

There's less trouble (v25-28)

There's less trouble being single than there is being married

25 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.

I have no *direct* teaching from Jesus on this Paul is saying, but I do have some wise counsel that I would commend to you

26 I think that in view of the present distress it is good for a person to remain as he is. 27 Are you bound to a wife? Do not seek to be free. Are you free from a wife? Do not seek a wife.

Given the context of the previous paragraph, he's most likely speaking to those who have just come to Christ

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*

Especially in view of the *present distress* (26) – which was probably the general breakdown and trouble of their society, due to the sin and debauchery that abounded
No need to add to that Paul says; No need to compound the problem with *two* wrongs
Like getting married just b/c, or getting a divorce when you shouldn't
Just remain as you are

28 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.

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 trouble
There will be stresses and strains that you wouldn't normally have if you were single

- Which is *painfully* obvious for those who are married
They're well aware of the fact that when you put two people together – from 2 different backgrounds, and 2 different perspectives . . .
With 2 different temperaments, and 2 different opinions– there's going to be trouble
It's unavoidable; Am I right?

You can't mix oil and water and expect pure bliss every minute of the day
Sometimes the oil gets hot and the water boils

I mean, what man can understand the mind of a woman? Even if she's *in* her right mind
I live with four of them – that's 1 wife and 3 daughters, just to be clear . . .
And the older they get, the more I just shake my head – who can understand them?

And from what Becky tells me, what woman can understand the mind of a man?
Assuming he has one in the first place; Or uses the one he does have

Which means that just due to human nature alone, not to mention our sin nature – all marriages *will have worldly troubles* (28)
All marriages will hurt *some* of the time, and *some* marriages will hurt *all* the time
Just b/c men are from Mars and women from Venus

- And then there's the trouble of *caring* for someone other than yourself
And bearing one another's burdens; And enduring each other's hardships
And suffering their sicknesses; And working through struggles
And comforting heartaches; And on and on and on

When a man and a woman come together in marriage – there's trouble
That doesn't mean it's void of joy, or without benefits; Not at all; There's a *ton* of both
It just means that marriage has its share of issues

Which I think is plain to see, and important to understand
But that's not the explanation Paul gives for why there's less trouble being single
That's found in v29-31, and leads us to the second advantage

There's more focus (v29-31)

There's less trouble being single, and more focus

After saying in v28 that *those who marry will have worldly troubles, and I would spare you that* . . .

He says in v29 – *This is what I mean, brothers: the appointed time has grown very short* [the appointed time of Christ's return that is].

And if it was short then, it's even shorter now

29b From now on, let those who have wives live as though they had none, 30 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, 31 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.

The reason Paul gives us for why there's less trouble being single than there is being married, is b/c it's easier to set your mind on things above, and keep it there
It's easier to *focus*

- Which is increasingly important b/c *the present form of this world is passing away* (31b)
IOW the window of opportunity is closing
The opportunity to fulfill Christ's mandate to spread the word, reach the lost, make disciples, build the church, and advance the kingdom
The window's closing; Time is short

Which explains why *Paul* was so focused on speeding the spread of God's word in *his* day (2 Thess 3:1), and why we should be too

So don't get so caught up in the cares of the world Paul is saying, that you forget or neglect the cares of God
Which is far easier to do if you're married than if you're single
It's far easier to get distracted, or entangled in earthly things, and *divert* your focus

- On the other hand, if you're single, you don't have to live *as though* you have no spouse like Paul says in v29 – you can simply do it; b/c you *don't* have a spouse
You can focus *all* your attention on being effective for the Lord

And when it comes to making sure your *mourning* and *rejoicing* doesn't get in the way of serving the Lord (30) . . .
You only have *one* set of emotions to worry about, not two
And the same is true of your perspective on material things, the things you *buy*
And your job, your *dealings* in the world (31)

There's a clear advantage being single, b/c there are fewer distractions to divert your attention, and therefore more focus for the things of God

That's the second advantage; The third is that . . .

There's less tension (v32-35)

Tension that Paul wants to prevent

32 I want you to be free from anxieties [worries, concerns, angst, tension]. *The unmarried man is anxious* [concerned] *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* [IOW there's a tension]. *And the unmarried or betrothed woman is anxious about the things of the Lord, how to be holy in body and spirit* [there's no tension]. *But the married woman is anxious about worldly things, how to please her husband.*

Now, Paul is not saying that marriage automatically prevents great devotion to the Lord
Nor that singleness guarantees it
Rather, he's saying that it's *easier* for a single person to be devoted to the Lord, b/c their *concerns* are singular

Meanwhile, a married person's concerns are divided – they're trying to please both their spouse *and* the Lord, and rightly so
But it creates a tension; Which Paul would have us avoid

• **35 I say this for your own benefit**

This – referring to his warnings about marriage in general, and his desire that we be free from anxieties

I say this for your own benefit, not to lay any restraint upon you [that is, to remain single when you want to be married], *but to promote good order and to secure your undivided devotion to the Lord.*

Good order so that people aren't getting married or getting divorced willy-nilly, just b/c they got saved – like he said back in v26-27

He promoting *good order*, and wants *to secure your undivided devotion to the Lord*
And *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 – even as married couples
That's why he says in v29 that if you're married, to live as though you weren't – to focus on the things of God as if you're single; that's the goal
But those of you who are single have an even *greater* capacity to do so, b/c there's less tension – less tension between serving God and serving your spouse

- And I gotta tell ya, I wish more of you would take advantage of it
As I look around our church, I wish more of you who are single, would *pour* yourselves into ministry, instead of just *dabbling* in it
You have a unique opportunity 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

I wish you would *immerse* yourself in Bible study, and *invest* yourself in people's lives – instead of just tip-toeing around the fringe

I wish that you would serve so exhaustively, and give of yourself so generously, and model such a sold-out, *undivided devotion* to the Lord . . .

That people around you are compelled to follow and moved to praise

Our Service Teams, Children's Ministry, Student Ministry, and Compassion Opportunities s/b overflowing and busting at the seams . . .
With single men/women who are passionate for the Lord

Some of you are already there, and I want to commend you – keep on
But many of you aren't; And it's time to catch the vision and make a change
To repent of your laziness, and selfishness, and self-centered attitude . . .
And start taking *full* advantage of your singleness, to serve the Lord apart from any tension

And then last, from v36-40, is that . . .

There's more freedom (v36-40)

There's less trouble being single, more focus, less tension, and more freedom

[There's a clear advantage being single]

36 *If anyone thinks that he is not behaving properly toward his betrothed* [i.e. he's not honoring her purity], *if his passions are strong* [his love and desire for intimacy is 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* [i.e. they've decided that being single is what they want], *being under no necessity but having his desire under control*
IOW their decision to remain single comes from the inside out, not the outside in
They're under no necessity – nobody is telling them or forcing them to remain single

Whoever . . . has determined this in his heart to keep her as his betrothed [i.e. to not marry her], *he will do well.* **38** *So then he who marries his betrothed does well, and he who refrains from marriage will do even better.*

- It's not wrong to get married; And if you do, you do well – it's a good thing
Ordained by God for procreation, pleasure, protection, and as a picture of Christ and the church – marriage, and the passions that go along with it, are God-given and good
So if you get married, you do well

But if your passions are in check and your convictions strong – you *do even better* to remain single
That is, you stand to benefit from less tension, more focus, less trouble, and more freedom

- More freedom for instance, to marry later on if God presents you with the opportunity, and your desire changes
It happens; And it's okay when it does; You have that freedom

Like in v39 where Paul says – *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.*
Only to someone who's a believer; Someone who's a faithful follower of Jesus Christ

That's what he means when he says *only in the Lord*
B/c marrying a believer, as a believer yourself, is the only way to start your marriage under the umbrella of God's protection and provision
It's the only way to be *in the Lord* together from the get-go

- But the main point here is that someone who is single, either b/c they're a widow or widower, or had a biblical divorce . . .
Someone who is single for those reasons, is free to remarry; they have that freedom
Just like someone who's *never* been married has that freedom

It may not be the *best* decision in every case, like Paul says in v40 re the widower . . .
In my judgment she is happier if she remains as she is . . .
It may not be the best decision, but she has that freedom

And then he says – *And I think that I too have the Spirit of God.*
IOW he's speaking as one who has the HS w/in him – he's under his influence

So someone who is single has freedom that a married person doesn't have – they're locked in

You can't just wake up one morning and decide that you're going to get a divorce – at least not with God's blessing you can't
But if you're single, you can; You can wake up, entertain the thought of marriage, and pursue it if you want; There's way more freedom

- Not to mention the freedom of your schedule, and time, and decisions
When you get married, you give up the right to make unilateral decisions
You give up the right to *do* as you please, *when* you please
And you give up the right to spend your money however *you* want
You no longer have the freedom to consider only yourself
But if you're single, you do; It's one of the advantages

- The question is, are you going to embrace it? *****
Are you going to embrace your singleness, or fight it?
Are you going to embrace it, or lament it?
Are you going to take *full* advantage of your situation, or squander it like so many?

Your answer makes all the difference – not only in *your* life, but in *ours*, as a church
Not only do you stand to benefit, but so do we

So embrace it, will you? Even if you want to be married
Embrace it by immersing yourself in the things of God, and investing yourself in the lives of his people

Pray – Stir within all of us an overwhelming desire for an undivided devotion
For those who are single, spur them on to embrace the life to which you've called them
Find them loving, serving, and giving in ways the rest of us can't