

***Question: Is it better to marry or remain single? What would Jesus say?***

The book of Genesis teaches us that there is a place both for married life and unmarried life. When God created the first man, he said, “It is not good for the man to be alone.” He then made a woman and gave the man and the woman to each other in marriage (Genesis 2:18-25). However, Matthew records a different response on marriage by Jesus. Upon hearing the comments of Jesus about divorce, his disciples questioned whether it is better marry or not. Jesus replied to them: “Not everyone can accept this word, but only those to whom it has been given. For some are eunuchs because they were born that way; others were made that way by men; and others have renounced marriage because of the kingdom of heaven. The one who can accept this should accept it” (Matthew 19:11-12). Jesus did not marry. The apostle Paul was unmarried and declared that because of circumstances in life it was better for him and some other people not to be married (1 Corinthians 7:1 & 8).

Without marriage, humanity could not have fulfilled God’s instructions to “be fruitful and increase in number” (Gen. 1:28). But the Bible also shows that it is better not to marry than to marry the wrong person. For example, life would have been better for King Ahab and the nation of Israel had he not married the wicked Jezebel (1 Kings 16ff). Experience in today’s world confirms that remaining single is far better for some people. Few things in life have brought more heartache and misery for married couples, their children and their families than unhappy marriages which often result in divorce. Yet, few things have brought greater joy and security into individual lives than a good, healthy marriage.

The Bible also teaches that to avoid the sins of sexual immorality, some people need to get married. The apostle Paul said of the unmarried: “But if they cannot control themselves, they should marry, for it is better to marry than to burn with passion” (1Cor. 7:9 NIV). Jesus always urged that we maintain total sexual abstinence before marriage. We must not allow our current culture’s sexual openness to deceive us into thinking that sex prior to marriage is necessary or helpful. God created us as sexual beings, and he has shown the beauty of the sexual relationship within marriage (Read Song of Solomon). God also called sex outside of marriage

fornication and adultery, activities that he strongly condemns (1 Corinthians 6:9; Hebrews 13:4). Sex is such a powerful force that it blocks one's ability to weigh objectively other factors that are important to a long-term and happy relationship. But if a person cannot resist the temptations of sexual immorality, he or she should marry.

In view of the above, I believe that Jesus would encourage marriage for most of us. He would also counsel us not to allow ourselves to feel pressured by anyone into getting married. To force a relationship in desperation or fear of never having a mate can lead to tragic results. The best marriages are formed when two strong individuals capable of living as singles combine their strengths to the mutual benefit of each other rather than a relationship with one overly dependent on the other. Such a co-dependent relationship often leads to resentment in one or the other marriage partner.

When making the decision to marry or not to marry, seek the guidance of the Lord through prayer. Also, seek the guidance of godly people who have demonstrated what it takes to live joyful and good lives as either married or single. The wise man said, "The way of a fool seems right to him, but a wise man listens to advice" (Proverbs 12:15). Pray not only for guidance in finding a mate but also pray for blessings on your life if you remain single. With the help of our Lord, either way can be a holy, good and joyful way of life.

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