

***Question: As a single person, I feel rather uncertain about whether I should marry or not. What advice would Jesus give? (Part 1 or 2)***

Jesus would never insist that you must be married to live a fulfilled life. The apostle Paul insisted on a person's right to marry or not marry (1 Corinthians 7:1-7 & 9:5). However, Paul did encourage unmarried persons to remain single because of a crisis at the time—which is unknown to us (1 Corinthians 7:26-28). Thus, there may also be conditions today that make singleness better for some people. But given most normal conditions, I believe that marriage is to be generally preferred over singleness. Let's consider some of the reasons for this recommendation.

Basic to our need for marriage is the way we have been created. Contrary to what many believe, God did not create marriage primarily for the purpose of the sexual relationship and procreation. He created man and woman for companionship. God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him" (Genesis 2:18). She would be a "suitable helper," the likes of which was not found for him among the animals (Genesis 2:19-20). The two were created to meet physical, emotional, intellectual and spiritual needs through a complementary companionship. Most of the time these needs are best met in an intimate companionship between a man and a woman who are committed to one another for a lifetime. This means that a healthy marriage is based on a healthy companionship instead of just sex appeal. Companionship lasts; sex appeal does not always last.

The advantages of this complementary companionship are numerous. A team of two working together can accomplish more with less effort than two working separately. Solomon said, "Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their work" (Ecclesiastes 4:9). He further added that "if one falls down, his friend can help him up. But pity the man who falls and has no one to help him up!" (Ecclesiastes 4:10). This world can also be cold and harsh without a faithful companion to provide comfort and warmth when needed. As the wise man said, "If two lie down together, they will keep warm. But how can one keep warm alone?" (Ecclesiastes 4:11). In addition, companionship provides a measure of security in a dangerous world. "Though

one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves” (Ecclesiastes 4:12).

While companionship is foundational to marriage, we do not deny that God also created us with a drive for sexual fulfillment. In his letter to the Corinthians, the apostle Paul admonished husbands and wives to fulfill their marital duties to one another in order to keep Satan from tempting them because of a lack of self-control (1 Corinthians 7:3-5). He also added, “It is better to marry than to burn with passion” (I Corinthians 7:8). These warnings are especially needed in a time that places so much emphasis on sexuality. When a man and a woman living in a loving and complementary companionship meet one another’s sexual needs, they live a life that is fulfilling, holy and safe from the devastating effects of sexual immorality on emotional, spiritual and physical health.

God is good, and marriage is good; and I do believe that Jesus would recommend marriage for most of us living today. This does not mean one cannot live a good and holy life without marriage. For more about Christianity and the single life, watch for this column next week.

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