

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

In last week's article, we gave reasons that Jesus would recommend marriage for most of us under normal conditions. But this does not mean that Jesus would say that it is bad to be single. When his disciples suggested that it might be better not to marry, Jesus said: "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). Also, the apostle Paul was unmarried; and he made it clear that because of circumstances in life it was better for him and for some other people not to be married (1 Corinthians 7:1 & 8).

Although God said of Adam, "It is not good for the man to be alone" (Genesis 2:18), later biblical history demonstrates that it can be better not to marry than to marry the wrong person. Life would have been better for Ahab and the nation of Israel had he not married the wicked Jezebel (1 Kings 16ff). Marriage was not better than remaining unmarried for the concubine who was abused and raped with her husband's permission (Judges 19).

In view of the above, I believe Jesus would encourage you not to allow yourself to feel pressured into getting married. Instead of pursuing a relationship, allow any relationship to come to you through normal friendships. Then allow that relationship to develop through natural processes over time. To force a relationship in desperation or fear of never having a mate can lead to tragic results.

Instead, work at being a strong individual who can survive alone as opposed to a dependent person. The best marriages are formed when two strong people combine their strengths to the mutual benefit of each other, as opposed to a relationship with one overly dependent on the other. An overly dependent relationship often leads to resentment in one or the other marriage partner.

Jesus would also urge that you maintain Christian sexual standards. This means total sexual abstinence outside of marriage. This is not easy for many of us in today's highly sexualized world. But don't allow our current culture's sexual openness to deceive you into thinking that sex without marriage is necessary or helpful. It is no accident that increased sexual activity outside of marriage has come along with an increase in the number of divorces. God created us as sexual beings, and he has shown the beauty of the sexual relationship within marriage (Read Song of Solomon). But 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 marriage. When a companionship relationship is first developed and a commitment made for life, the true beauty of sex will bless that marriage wonderfully. Keep sexually pure before marriage if you want a happy and lasting marriage.

Above all, allow Jesus to bring eternal fulfillment into your life through a meaningful relationship with him. Develop a daily relationship with God and Christ through prayer, scripture and meditation. Pray not only for guidance in the possibility of finding a mate, but also pray for blessings on your life as a single person. Jesus understands the challenges of a single life because he remained single during his earthly life. A strong relationship with our Lord can fill your life in a way that can more than compensate for any losses or absences in our earthly lives. Perhaps this is what he meant when he said: "At the resurrection people will neither marry nor be given in marriage; they will be like the angels in heaven" (Matt 22:30 NIV).

In addition, you should seek the guidance of godly people who have demonstrated what it takes to have a full, happy and Godly life whether single or married. The wise man said, "The way of a fool seems right to him, but a wise man listens to advice" (Proverbs 12:15). The best advice will help you find joy in life whether you marry or remain single.

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