

1 Corinthians 7:25-40: Purposeful Singleness

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Introduction

- Picture of Young Professionals - a table full of young adults starting out in life - I couldn't find a place to park nor a place to sit and eat because of them. Question on their minds: When will I get married? My journey different - lived in an area where not a lot of singles - pastored a church. My attitude: I'm never getting married.
- Single adulthood is one of the most awkward times of life in a world that puts high priority on relationships and romance. For many, it becomes harder and harder as you watch one friend after the other get married while you see no prospect for marriage.
- Can be a lonely time - I remember the loneliness of going to an empty home each night.
- Single adulthood can also be one of the most rewarding times of life. Not tethered to anyone, free to come and go. Free to pursue dreams and desires in a unique way - for Staci, it was missionary work. For me, it was Ph.D. work.
- In our church, growing number of single people. Some, single, never married, and looking toward marriage some day. Others, single again after a divorce or widowed.
- If single, a unique season of life, and I don't know how you feel about your singleness. Maybe you love it, maybe you hate it. Whatever your attitude toward singleness, Paul has a word for you. Paul wants you to steward your singleness well for the Kingdom of God.

- Three ways to live as a single person for the glory of God:

See singleness as a gift.

- vs. 17-24 - Live in the situation you were called. Right now, some of you are called to singleness. It may not be where you want to be, but it is where God has you. If God has you in a season of singleness, it's by His design. Whatever God has designed for you is for your good and His glory. It's a gift.
- This doesn't mean you will always be single. Historically, 80% - 90% of people will get married at some point in life. However, like God did with me and Staci, God may call you to an extended period of singleness. For some, singleness will be for your entire life. If so, it's still a gift.
- vs. 6-9 (from last week) - Paul a single man (so was Jesus). "I wish that all people were as I am." Paul saw BOTH singleness and marriage as a gift from God and encouraged both unmarried and widowed to stay single if possible.
- Truth: whether you are single or married, it doesn't always feel like a gift. Singleness and marriage are both joyous and fulfilling and difficult and challenging. If singleness is a gift, then that means:
- **If you are single you are not an incomplete person.** Sometimes you feel that way, especially if you have never been married. Sometimes you feel like your life will not really begin until you are married. You ARE NOT incomplete (regardless of what Jerry Maguire says). If you are single, your singleness regularly reminds you of the sufficiency of the Gospel. Jesus is enough, and Jesus completes you. (I struggled with this as a single pastor. My thought was I'd never be taken seriously as a pastor unless I was married. Not true!)
- **If you are married you need to be mindful of your single friends and single family members.** Easy to forget about our single friends or treat

them as if they're second class citizens. Easy to say dumb things like: "As soon as you're satisfied with God, He'll bring someone special into your life." Many married people aren't satisfied with God. Or, "God has some more work to do on you before you're married." God has some work to do on us married people too. We say things that we mean to be helpful but are actually hurtful. What your single friends need is for you to embrace them and love them. (As a single, I was thankful for married couples that included me - in their homes, social gatherings, etc.)

Embrace your season of singleness.

- vs. 25-27 - virgins - either singles or betrothed people who Paul calls to remain unmarried because of present distress. Apparently, something taking place in Corinth that causes Paul to encourage people to stay single. Paul to some: "Now's simply not the right time for marriage."
- Present distress could have been persecution of believers. It may have been that persecution was causing families to be ripped apart. Therefore, don't marry because you may be ripped away from your spouse. Or, present distress could have been a famine in the region. It would have been difficult to provide for a family. For that reason, stay single. However, if married, present distress should not cause you to leave your spouse.
- Seems as if Paul is not necessarily in this context calling people to a life of singleness as much as he is a season of singleness. It's just not the right time for marriage. Embrace the season God has you in. Paul's word to singles:
- **Take advantage of your season of singleness for God's glory.**
- Paul wants single people to see the advantages of singleness and the struggles of marriage. Paul NOT against marriage ([Ephesians 5](#)). He does want believers to know the COST of marriage. Single people think

the grass is greener on the other side, but marriage presents its series of challenges just as singleness presents its challenges.

- The advantages of singleness: focus (vs. 32). You can obviously and should be devoted to God within your marriage, but in singleness, you are in a unique season to serve the Lord with intense focus. E.g., when I was a single pastor, I could focus on my calling in a different way than I do now. I was with my flock all the time. I was with people every night of the week. Now, obligations have changed. My family is my priority, and rightly so. I was able to focus on getting a Ph.D. Staci was able to focus on international mission work. We were both able to focus on what God had for us in that season and when we married, those experiences in our singleness profoundly shaped us. Singleness was hard for both of us, but it was not a curse. It was a gracious gift where we were both able to serve the Lord in unique ways.
- As a single adult, I wish I would have not worried so much about my future (who/when I would marry), and I wish I would have focused far more on serving the Lord faithfully. God knew what He was doing in my life. He knows what He's doing in yours. If single, live devoted to the Lord and trust Him with the details of your life.
- Right now, as a single adult, those big dreams God has placed in your heart, pursue them.
- **Count the cost before you get married.** (vs. 32-36) Tendency to think all of our struggles go away once we marry the person of our dreams. Tendency to think once married won't struggle with loneliness, sexual temptation, etc. Not true.
- Reality, marriage a gift from God but not without struggles. Paul is honest about struggles. For 16 years, it's not been just me. It's been me, Staci, Luke, and Hudson. While my family is a great gift that I wouldn't trade for anything, my life is vastly different than it was when I was a single pastor. The responsibility is different. The demands on my time

are different. My priorities are different. There's sick kids to care for, baseball practice, making time for my wife, etc.

- Each season of life is a gift. and each season of life presents unique opportunities and challenges. Bottom line, whatever season you are in, make the most of your time (vs. 29-31). Time is short. Prioritize what matters eternally no matter what season of life you are in. Paul not telling married people to ignore their spouses, but he is reminding us of what's most important. Marriage and family is not the ultimate goal in life - living for Jesus is. If you are married, you have a responsibility to place marriage and everything else in its proper context. Everything you enjoy in this life is fading away, only Christ is eternal.

Know when it's time to marry.

- Paul telling us there's a season for singleness - for some - that season will extend for your entire life. For others, it will be a much shorter season, and you need to know how to bring that season to the end.
- Vs. 36 - 38 - If betrothed/engaged, don't wait to get married. Only wait if you can control yourselves. Again, Paul speaking about a contextual issue that we aren't aware of. He's giving these instructions in light of the "present distress."
- vs. 39-40 - Once married, it's for life. If widowed, free to remarry, but only in the Lord. Or, according to the Lord's will. But, Paul also encourages the widow to stay single based on his own opinion and experience as a single man.
- We live in a different culture and time than the Apostle Paul. If you find yourself single, take these words of Paul and be wise as you think about marriage. I think we can say based on this text:
- **Don't be in a hurry.** I get it. You're lonely. Everyone you know is married. Live the life God has for you now and trust God for your future

spouse. If you are in a hurry to get married, you will be tempted to make an unwise choice. You may end up marrying someone just to get out of your loneliness instead of marrying someone who follows Jesus well and who desires the same thing you do.

- **Don't take too long.** If you are single and in a dating relationship, date with intentionality. Dating is a road that leads to marriage, and if you're not ready for marriage, stay off the road. (Most teenagers are not ready for marriage. Parents, you need to help your teenagers navigate relationships.) Fact of the matter is, some of you are not ready for marriage. You need to mature as a man or a woman in Christ before you marry. At the same time, you don't need to date someone for three years to figure out if that person is marriage material. Be wise. Pray.
- **Enjoy the process of getting to know someone.** If you are dating, date with intentionality, but don't put too much pressure on yourselves. You don't have to determine if the person of the opposite sex that you are spending time with is the person you are going to marry on the first date. If marriage is a lifetime commitment, you need to know the person you are marrying before you marry them.
- **Be accountable.** If single, you need people in your life who are married to help you think about marriage. You need other single friends who will hold you accountable in your relationships. God has given you a community of believers who are wise and want to help you wisely navigate your single years.
- **Remember that Jesus is sufficient.** Getting married will not make your life complete, but Jesus will. You need Jesus far more than you need a spouse. Paul knew that. No wonder Paul said that he counted everything loss in order to gain Christ. ([Philippians 3:8](#)).
- More than you need to gain a spouse, you need to gain Jesus. You will never be satisfied in your singleness or your marriage until you are satisfied in Christ. Your biggest issue in life isn't singleness or a

struggling marriage. Your biggest issue is sin. Jesus came to take away your sin by dying in your place and rising again from the dead. Repent of your sins and believe in Him.