



Bible Study On God-formed Relationships: Singleness

You are encouraged to read pp. 10-13 in “Relationships are Worth Having” on “Singleness” and “The Scripture and “Singleness Theology” as background for the bible study. You can also find the material on our CapChurch website at www.CapChurch.ca under the tab “life@CapChurch” and the file “Sexuality and Relationships (PDF).”

Those who marry will face many troubles in this life..1 Cor. 7:28

1. **Read Matthew 19:11-12.** [context—Pharisees test Jesus re divorce]

NIV—10 The disciples said to him, "If this is the situation between a husband and wife, it is better not to marry." 11 Jesus replied, "Not everyone can accept this word, but only those to whom it has been given. 12 For some are eunuchs because they were born that way; others were made that way by men; and others have *renounced marriage* [or *have made themselves eunuchs*] because of the kingdom of heaven. The one who can accept this should accept it.

MSG--But Jesus said, "Not everyone is mature enough to live a married life. It requires a certain aptitude and grace. Marriage isn't for everyone. Some, from birth seemingly, never give marriage a thought. Others never get asked—or accepted. And some decide not to get married for kingdom reasons. But if you're capable of growing into the largeness of marriage, do it."

- 1.1. What does it mean to accept Jesus' word in this passage?
- 1.2. What are some of the cultural messages in our time that would make it difficult for people to accept his word?
- 1.3. What kinds of attitudes and behaviour would characterize those who have “renounced marriage because of the kingdom of heaven?”

2. **Read I Corinthians 7:7-9** [context—Paul answering questions about marriage asked by the Corinthians]

NIV—7 I wish that all men were as I am. But each man has his own gift from God; one has this gift, another has that. 8 Now to the unmarried and the widows I say: It is good for them to stay unmarried, as I am. 9 But if they cannot control themselves, they should marry, for it is better to marry than to burn with passion.

MSG—7 Sometimes I wish everyone were single like me—a simpler life in many ways! But celibacy is not for everyone any more than marriage is. God gives the gift of the single life to some, the gift of the married life to others.

8-9 I do, though, tell the unmarried and widows that singleness might well be the best thing for them, as it has been for me. But if they can't manage their desires and emotions, they should by all means go ahead and get married. The difficulties of marriage are preferable by far to a sexually tortured life as a single.

- 2.1. In what way is singleness a gift?
- 2.2. What is the best way to treat a gift?
- 2.3. Why is it good to stay unmarried?
- 2.4. Does verse 9 mean that everyone who has sexual feelings should get married?

3. Read I Corinthians 7:25-40

MSG-- The Master did not give explicit direction regarding virgins, but as one much experienced in the mercy of the Master and loyal to him all the way, you can trust my counsel. Because of the current pressures on us from all sides, I think it would probably be best to stay just as you are. Are you married? Stay married. Are you unmarried? Don't get married. But there's certainly no sin in getting married, whether you're a virgin or not. All I am saying is that when you marry, you take on additional stress in an already stressful time, and I want to spare you if possible.

29-31 I do want to point out, friends, that time is of the essence. There is no time to waste, so don't complicate your lives unnecessarily. Keep it simple—in marriage, grief, joy, whatever. Even in ordinary things—your daily routines of shopping, and so on. Deal as sparingly as possible with the things the world thrusts on you. This world as you see it is on its way out.

32-35 I want you to live as free of complications as possible. When you're unmarried, you're free to concentrate on simply pleasing the Master. Marriage involves you in all the nuts and bolts of domestic life and in wanting to please your spouse, leading to so many more demands on your attention. The time and energy that married people spend on caring for and nurturing each other, the unmarried can spend in becoming whole and holy instruments of God. I'm trying to be helpful and make it as easy as possible for you, not make things harder. All I want is for you to be able to develop a way of life in which you can spend plenty of time together with the Master without a lot of distractions.

36-38 If a man has a woman friend to whom he is loyal but never intended to marry, having decided to serve God as a "single," and then changes his mind, deciding he should marry her, he should go ahead and marry. It's no sin; it's not even a "step down" from celibacy, as some say. On the other hand, if a man is comfortable in his decision for a single life in service to God and it's entirely his own conviction and not imposed on him by others, he ought to stick with it. Marriage is spiritually and morally right and not inferior to singleness in any way, although as I indicated earlier, because of the times we live in, I do have pastoral reasons for encouraging singleness.

39-40 A wife must stay with her husband as long as he lives. If he dies, she is free to marry anyone she chooses. She will, of course, want to marry a believer and have the blessing of the Master. By now you know that I think she'll be better off staying single. The Master, in my opinion, thinks so, too.

- 3.1. Does it change the actual message because Paul says he has no command from the Lord?
- 3.2. In what way do those who get married face many troubles?
- 3.3. What does the 'as if' phrase communicate in verses 29-31?
- 3.4. How much influence does the passing of this world have in our thinking as marrieds and singles?
- 3.5. How do you react personally to Paul's argument in verses 32-35?
- 3.6. After reading this passage, is it more accurate to say that marriage is better than singleness or singleness is better than marriage?
- 3.7. What does it mean to only marry someone who "belongs to the Lord?"

4. Personal Connection

- 4.1. How do these passages fit in with the messages about singleness in the Christian and non-Christian culture?
- 4.2. How would these passages 'fly' with your Christian and non-Christian single friends?
- 4.3. Evangelicals often speak of the 'authority of Scripture' indicating that it has the power to influence our lives. Whether you are a Christian or not, in what way do these passages have authority in your life?