

Singleness: Good or Bad?

read

1 Corinthians 7:7, 32-35

think

Growing up, I was under the impression that everyone got married. Since most fairy tales end with the princess finding her prince charming and living “happily ever after,” I just assumed that’s what happened to everyone. If even Princess Fiona could land a husband as an ogre, surely there is something really wrong with you if you aren’t married. It wasn’t until I was approaching 30 and wrestling with my own singleness that I discovered what God’s Word

actually says about marriage and singleness.

When reading the Old Testament, it is clear that singleness was not viewed in a positive light. If you were single and never married, that meant you wouldn’t have children and your family name would not continue. These were both viewed as curses from God. However, the New Testament tells a different story. Jesus, Paul, and other early church leaders were single. In 1 Corinthians 7, Paul writes that he wishes everyone could be single and that it is a gift from God (vs 7). Later, in verses 32-35, Paul writes that being single allows you to have “undivided devotion to the Lord” (vs 35). Paul makes the case that when someone is married, their attention and devotion is divided between their spouse and the Lord. Being single allows you to focus your attention solely on your relationship with and service to the Lord.

Does this mean that God or Paul view singleness as superior to marriage? No! After creating everything and declaring it good, God says in Genesis 2:18, “It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him.” Marriage was designed by God so we could fulfill his command to “be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it...” (Gen 1:28). In Ephesians 5, Paul tells us that a godly marriage is a beautiful picture that points forward to the marriage of Christ with his church, a reality we await when Christ returns. He wanted us to get a glimpse into what our relationship with Christ will be like in eternity.

In his book *Holy Sexuality and the Gospel*, Dr. Christopher Yuan writes this: “Quite simply, singleness is a gift. It is good—nothing special, nothing complicated, nothing out of the ordinary... Paul’s main message in 1 Corinthians 7 is that whatever life condition we find ourselves in, whether married or unmarried, it’s our call of salvation—our call to Christ—that matters most.” Our ultimate contentment will not be found in marriage or singleness, but in Christ.

apply

- How is singleness viewed in your community? At school? In your church?
- What advantages do you think there are to serving the Lord as a single person? What about as a married person?
- Single people often feel lonely, even in the church. What are some things you could do as a family to connect with the single people in your church?

pray

Gracious God and heavenly Father, we thank you for the good gifts of singleness and marriage. Help us to see neither as superior, but both as good gifts that can be used to further your Kingdom. Remind us that our ultimate contentment does not come from marriage or singleness but only in our relationship with Christ.

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