

# “Why Singleness Matters” // 1 Corinthians 7 //

## *Cutting Through the Noise # 6*

[VIDEO: Akinsola, Generosity]

Our mission at TSC is following the HS, we exist to create a movement of DMD who seek the good of the city in RDU and around the world.

A disciple, we’ve defined, is someone who pursues 5 identities: worshiper, family member, servant, steward, witness. In that video you just saw, Gideon and Alex beautifully exhibit the identity of a steward. Generosity is one of the greatest privileges and perhaps the primary source of joy and enjoyment in the Christian life. It’s like we always say, “Generosity is not something God wants from you; it’s something he wants for you.” Over the next several weeks we’re going to explore that more.

1 Corinthians 7, **if you have your Bibles.**<sup>1</sup>

This is a long chapter—with a lot of great stuff in it. But it’s quite a challenge to tackle. Nicolas Cage is the only man in human history to fully understand what Paul taught here, but unfortunately, he’s so focused on the 35 movies he’s filming right now that he doesn’t have time to share that insight with any of us, so you are stuck with me.

If you remember, **Paul’s first letter to the Corinthians is not so much a composed work of theology** as it is Paul just answering a bunch of questions the Corinthians were asking. See how chapter 7 opens? **7:1 Now in response to the matters you wrote about: “It is good for a man not to have sexual relations with a woman.”**

See how that last part is in quotes? They had written Paul a letter with a bunch of questions, and commentators assume that what Paul is doing is listing out a quote from their letter and responding to it. Apparently, there was a group in the Corinthian church who, in response to the sexual promiscuity of Corinth, were saying “Absolute celibacy is the way to go. Jesus people are no-sex people.”

So Paul, in this chapter, is going to talk about the blessing of both marriage and singleness. Christianity actually has a high view of both.<sup>2</sup>

Here’s the dilemma we are in: the church culture we are a part of sometimes seems obsessed with marriage. Like, marriage and lots of kids is God’s plan for everyone, and if you don’t get married, something went wrong.

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<sup>1</sup> Works Consulted: Andrew Wilson, *1 Corinthians for You*; Rebecca McLaughlin, *Confronting Christianity*; Jon Tyson, “Singleness,” from the series *God & Sexuality*, preached at Bridgetown Church on March 20, 2019; Sam Allberry, *Seven Myths About Singleness*; David Platt, “Beauty in Brokenness, Part 3: Beauty in Both Singleness and Marriage,” sermon preached at McLean Bible Church on February 28, 2021; John Mark Comer, “First Corinthians: Undivided Devotion,” sermon preached at Bridgetown Church on March 13, 2011; Timothy Keller, “1 Corinthians 6–7,” sermon preached at Redeemer Presbyterian Church on February 7, 2005; Timothy Keller, “Singleness - The Biblical Guideline,” Q&A hosted at Redeemer Presbyterian Church on Sept 8, 1993.

<sup>2</sup> Andrew Wilson

Single people often feel marginalized. Single people, am I speaking truth here? I know of one church that called its **adult social group, 'Pairs and Spares.'**<sup>3</sup> Pairs--the married people--and that makes the single people **spares**? So we're in a church culture obsessed with marriage.

On the other hand, secular culture seems obsessed with singleness. Not biblical singleness, of course, which means celibate singleness, but a sexually-free, no-commitment singleness where you have sex whenever it's convenient for you with no strings attached.

- Every year in our society the **average age** for a first marriage goes up--right now it's about 30 yrs old for men and for 28 for women. In 1960, 72% of all adults in the U.S. were married. Today, that number is closer to 50%, and every year it keeps dropping.
- **Sociologists predict that by the time today's teenagers reach 50 years of age,** over a quarter will have been single their whole life.
- For those of you under, say, 30, you may not realize that it hasn't always been this way. But to put things in perspective: In 1960, 72% of all adults in the U.S. were married; in the 1990s, that number was coming down, but it was still relatively high—in the 60-65% range. But today, that number is closer to 50%, and every year it keeps dropping.<sup>4</sup>
- This isn't just "the U.S.," either. This is us! Over half of our church--about 7000 of you--is single. Let that sink in. If you are single right now, raise your hand. Keep it up. OK, **if you are single and would really love to meet THE ONE sometime soon, raise your hand.** Keep it up. Look around. Just kidding.

**Paul wants to show you God's plan for both marriage and singleness.** As I said, Christianity has an incredibly high view of both.<sup>5</sup>

Paul begins by championing the goodness of sex within marriage: **2 But because sexual immorality is so common, each man should have sexual relations with his own wife, and each woman should have sexual relations with her own husband.** **Translation:** Sex is a good desire; a God-given desire. Christians are not anti-sex. Through it God gives some beautiful illustrations of the gospel and it's also his way of multiplying people on earth. When he said in Genesis 1, "Be fruitful and multiply," that meant, "Get married, have sex and have kids."

**3 A husband should (therefore) fulfill his marital duty to his wife, and likewise a wife to her husband. 4 A wife does not have the right over her own body, but her husband does.** Now, this would have made total sense to the average Corinthian man. It was just assumed that the wife was the man's sexual servant. But then Paul throws a total curveball: **In the same way, a husband does not have the right over his own body, but his wife does.** That would have blown their minds. They were used to talking about the wife's obligations to the husband; Paul says to the husband--you should see yourself as her servant as well.

Some of you guys are like, "Now, that's my kind of service. Sign me up. Put me in, coach. I'm here to serve."

Now, sometimes this verse gets pulled out of context like some kind of sexual trump card you can play in marriage. "I want to have sex and Paul says I have authority over your body, so you can't really say no." A lot of damage has been done by using this verse that way. But that's not what Paul is trying to say--the sexual relationship is a lot more complicated than that. All Paul is saying is that in marriage both partners should see themselves as the servant of the other.

<sup>3</sup> Rodney Clapp, *Families at the Crossroads*, 89.

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.pewresearch.org/social-trends/2011/12/14/barely-half-of-u-s-adults-are-married-a-record-low/>;

<https://www.pewresearch.org/social-trends/2021/10/05/rising-share-of-u-s-adults-are-living-without-a-spouse-or-partner/>.

<sup>5</sup> Following here the helpful exegesis by Andrew Wilson!

5 Do not deprive one another—except when you agree for a time, to devote yourselves to prayer. Then come together again; otherwise, Satan may tempt you because of your lack of self-control.

So Paul completely debunks the idea that sexual celibacy is some kind spiritually superior state. He's commanding you married people, "Get after it." Some of y'all are like, "This is the best sermon I've ever heard." But then, he takes a turn: 6 I say this as a concession, not as a command. 7 I wish that all people were as I am. (What is he? Single.) But each has his own gift from God, one person has this gift, another has that.

Both marriage and singleness are *gifts*. The word he uses is *charisma*, one of the words we use for "spiritual gifts." Paul says, "I'm single, that's my gift. And I actually wish more of you had this gift."

"Wait, but Paul, isn't it necessary to find that special someone and have sex in order to feel fully alive?" Nope. The most fulfilled person ever to walk the face of the earth was a 33-year old, single man who remained celibate all of his life.

8 I say to the unmarried and to widows (IOW, to those of you who are single because the right person hasn't come along yet; or to those of you who are single again... which, by the way, I know is probably a very painful spot for you. Maybe, like Paul says here, it's because they passed away. Or maybe they walked out. Or maybe you proposed and they rejected you. Or maybe you find yourself with an SSA and just have no desire to be married to someone of the opposite sex. For whatever reason you are single, Paul says): It is good for them if they remain as I am. (Single.)

*I have seven statements on sex, singleness, and spiritual gifts:*

### 1. Singleness is not an inferior state to marriage

Single people **get a raw deal** sometimes and married people in the church are always trying to fix them up as if there was something wrong with them.

- **I had a pastor friend who was single until he was in his 30's.** He said he always got so tired of the little old ladies at his church who would say to him at each wedding, "Don't worry. You're next." He said he'd go up to the same little old ladies at funerals and say, "Don't worry; you're next."
- And sometimes we talk like the reason single people are single is because they are not mature enough for marriage yet: And I know that's not true because **some of the most messed up, immature people I know are married**—Amen?
- But we say things like: "As soon as you're satisfied in God alone, he'll bring someone special into your life." As if we **earn God's blessings** by achieving a **spiritual Jedi state**.
- Or, **"God just has to do a little bit of work on you before he brings you that special someone. You have to become someone wonderful before God gives you someone wonderful."** As though God grants marriage as a **reward to the satisfactorily sanctified**.
- Tim Keller says, "Under all these statements is the premise that a single life is (a 2<sup>nd</sup> class life) a state of deprivation for people not yet fully formed for marriage."<sup>6</sup>

**These statements are not true, and that's because** marriage is not some superior state. In fact, any marriage is just a temporary gift that God gives to some for the fulfillment of his purposes.

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<sup>6</sup> Tim Keller, *Meaning of Marriage*, 196–97.

Look at what Paul says in vs. **29** The appointed time has grown very short. From now on, let those who have wives live as though they had none... (Sometimes people read that verse and think, “What in the world? Paul is telling men with wives to live as though they didn’t have one?” That’s like the **patron verse of people going to Vegas**. “Let’s live like we have no wives!” That’s not what it means. He explains in verse **31** For the present form of this world is passing away. And along with it, marriage, which was just a temporary gift.

- If you are married, realize that marriage is not ultimate. It’s a temporary, earthly picture of an ultimate relationship--your relationship with God.
- If you are single, realize that your singleness is not ultimate. It’s a temporary assignment on earth, and soon in heaven you’ll experience that relationship of which marriage was just a dull shadow.

**Throughout the Gospels, Jesus said the most fascinating things about marriage.** Once, in the Gospel of Mark he was asked this really complicated question about marriage--a woman who had 7 husbands because each died and they said, “In heaven, whose wife will she be?” Jesus cuts them off and says, “Well, you are wrong in your premise. There is no marriage in heaven.” (**Mark 12:25**--For when they rise from the dead, they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven.)

- **There’s no marriage in heaven.** Marriage was just a temporary illustration of the love of God; a temporary means by which God populated the earth. It was a good gift, but soon it will give way to the relationship to which it pointed.
- I love how Rebecca McLaughlin says it: “At its best, marriage and sex are like gateway drugs that point us to a far more fulfilling relationship.”<sup>7</sup>
- Or, **John Piper:** Marriage is temporary; and it will finally give way to the relationship to which it was pointing all along: Christ and the church—the way a picture is no longer needed when you see face to face.”<sup>8</sup>

So, again, to go back to **1 Cor 7:29** The appointed time has grown very short. From now on, let those who have wives live as though they had none. **31** For the present form of this world is passing away...

**Both situations are light and momentary,** and soon they will give way to what is permanent and ultimate: Christ and the church.

*Which leads me to #2...*

## 2. The gifts of marriage and singleness both have their advantages

### **Marriage is a GIFT.**

- To state the obvious, it was God who looked at man by himself and said, “It is not good that man should be alone; so I’ll make a helper for him.” And the book of Genesis says that God fashioned a woman. The first word used to describe her was “edzer kenegdo” (in Hebrew) which means “same but different.” She was made in the image of God just like him, but she was made different--complementary.
- Even though **every person is an individual**, there are general patterns to men and women that go back to how they were created. Most women are more nurturing and thus better at creating a stable home environment. Like many guys, I was not good at creating any kind of home environment. For most guys, their **dream pad** includes a **waterbed**, a **black leather couch** and a **TV with a PlayStation 3** and **surround sound**. . . and that’s it. Before I got married, **to move** out of my house and into another took me a **Ford Mustang**, a few bungee cords and 15 minutes. Now, it would take a **full-size SUV just to haul the pillows** that sit on top of my bed. And **another** to haul just the **toiletry products** in our shower. I look around in our

<sup>7</sup> McLaughlin, 161.

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.desiringgod.org/resource-library/sermons/single-in-christ-a-name-better-than-sons-and-daughters>

bathroom and wonder what all the stuff IS? Who knew there were so many different kinds of soaps? **My bathroom used to have just one bar of soap in it**, and I cleaned everything with it—my face, my hair, the floors. Again, not everybody is like that, but God made the man and woman complementary so that the two of them together would be a more complete reflection of the image of God than would one gender be alone. And bringing these two complementary pairs together in marriage is a GIFT.

- **Even more importantly**, marriage is a gift because it teaches us, experientially, about the love of God. C.S. Lewis compared it to a **ray of the sun; a ray which** warms our face. We look back up along the ray to the God from whom it emanates. I will tell you: **marriage has taught me more about the gospel than anything else**: more than I learned in seminary. To think about kindness, tenderness, forgiveness, security, unconditional love: I learned the doctrines in seminary; I experienced them in marriage.

### ***Marriage is a gift; Singleness is also a gift.***

- You say, “How so?” You don’t have the complementary pair God gave in the Garden; you don’t have the physical experience of the love of God.
- Paul explains how it is a gift in vs. **33 The married man is anxious about worldly things, how to please his wife, 34 and his interests are divided.** (Now, by “worldly” here, he doesn’t mean “sinful.” In this context, he just means earthly concerns.”)
  - A healthy marriage takes **a lot of time**. Sometimes you have to stay up late working things out. Your wife needs time. Your kids need time. As a married man, I am not able to go on all the **mission trips I want to go on** anymore. **One of our singles** here was telling me about the most amazing ministry they have been doing, hanging out with a group of Muslim refugees until 10pm multiple nights of the week. I can’t do that anymore. I’ve got to run little people to soccer practice, help them do homework, help them get ready for bed. So, I’m guzzling 5-hour energy drinks on the way home from work because I know my real work is about to start.
    - People ask me, “What are your hobbies?” I say, “Do you mean, What did they used to be?” My hobbies are named Kharis, Allie, Ryah, and Adon. Do you have pets? Yep, K, A, R, A. I don’t need any more living beings depending on me right now.
  - **Marriage puts a lot of demands on your money.** I have people to take care of. I want to bless and take care of them. Guys: Being married and having a family is expensive. My wife and I will sometimes call our kids: Tesla, Hawaii vacation, and Beach House because that’s what they cost me. Having a family limits my giving.
  - The sacrifice of my time and money is limited-- divinely limited--because of the responsibilities God gave me to my wife and kids.
- It’s not just limiting for the man. Paul says for the women: Vs. **34 ...And the unmarried or betrothed woman is anxious about the things of the Lord, how to be holy in body and spirit. But the married woman is anxious about worldly things, how to please her husband.**
  - If you **get married and have kids**, it affects your career—husband or wife, and for many of you, it may stymie it altogether. I asked an older pastor that I looked to, one who had written several books--**I said, “I’m thinking about book-writing. What are your favorite books that you wrote?”** He said, *“My favorite? The ones I didn’t write when my kids were young.”*
  - The freedom of a single person to pursue certain things, both recreational and career-wise, is astounding.
  - **Single ladies, you get to listen to and follow the Holy Spirit with so much freedom.** For a married woman, so much of her ministry is assigned to her. My wife is a full-time missionary to the Unreached People Group known as the Greear kids. And they are pretty savage; it’s no easy assignment I grant you. But that’s her assignment. You get to choose where you get engaged.

- **When a refugee family comes to RDU in the middle of the night** and we need some people to help them get settled in, you know who usually shows up? Single women. Some single men, but especially single women. FWIW, I've actually thought that is a great place to meet someone. If you're looking to get married, the kind of person who shows up in the middle of the night to help a refugee family move in is probably the right kind of person. So get on the list.
- **Listen: The majority of our best volunteers around here are single women.** I have told you before that the IMB says that **3 out of 4 applicants to go to the most Unreached places** on the planet are single women. I usually say that to admonish the guys: "Guys, get with it!" But one of the reasons that is true is what Paul is saying here: singleness is a gift that can free you up for mission.

So, it's now wonder Paul says, "**7 I wish that all people were as I am.**" There would be so much extra bandwidth in the church for ministry!

### **3. The first consideration for "Should I get married?" is... (a) Do I have the gift?**

That's the million dollar question, right? How do you know if you have the gift?

- Illus. (**How we teased girls at my college...**) How God paid me back. After we started dating and got serious... Veronica's #1 gift.

How do you know that you have the gift? Well, first, realize that most people assume that a gift is some kind of lifelong assignment. Like God stamps before you are born: "Married," or "Single." It doesn't work like that. I'm going to show you this more when we study 1 Cor 12, but a spiritual gift, a *charisma*, is a special empowerment that comes on you for a time for some spiritual assignment.

All of us are single for time, which means we need a spiritual empowerment to do that well. And God will give it to us.

Look, don't make it hard. If you are married, you have the gift of marriage. How do I know? Because you are married. And even if you felt like it was a mistake, God will give you the spiritual power to do it well. And if you are single, you have the gift of singleness. At least for the moment.

You say, "Well, I'm single now, but wondering if marriage is a gift God is planning to give me." Paul gives you some other clues: **9 For it is better to marry than to be aflame with passion.**

- Taking this at face value, saying *if you're "aflame with passion,"* means it's ok to ask God for a spouse. But it could be that in praying about it, God answers your prayer by giving you the ability to control yourself without marriage. Or he might take away the desire to be married, or have an. I had a friend who, the more she prayed about it, the less desire she had to get married. She always felt guilty about that; like there was something wrong with her. She said she heard someone teach through 1 Cor 7 and it felt like such a relief. Oh, this change of desires is from God.
- Maybe there is in you a desire to get married, but it's being displaced by a larger desire to do something for which being single would be a big advantage. That's the gift of singleness!

Paul, who had the gift of singleness, describes himself like this: **37 But whoever is firmly established in his heart, being under no necessity but having his desire under control, ...he will do well.**

- Firmly established; under no necessity; having his desire under control: Is that you?
- You've **probably got the gift of singleness**, at least for the time being, and you should take advantage of that.
- If you're not like that, ask God for a spouse.

Paul is like, “This is really between you and God. Don’t make this hard. Don’t make it mystical.” Did you notice how ambivalently Paul speaks in this chapter?

36 If any man... feels he should marry—he can do what he wants...

39 But if (a wife’s) husband dies, she is free to be married to anyone she wants—only in the Lord. 40 But she is happier if she remains as she is, in my opinion. And I think that I also have the Spirit of God.

6 I say (all) this as a concession, not as a command. 7 I wish that all people were as I am. But each has his own gift from God...

IOW, “Don’t make this hard, weird, or mystical. Pray about it, and let God lead you through your desires. Look at the passions the Spirit of God grows in your heart, and trust that where he leads you, he will empower you.”

#### 4. The second consideration for “Should I get married?” is... (b) “Is it the right time?”

Let me show you a couple of verses here that confuse people sometimes. Vs. 26: **26 I think that in view of the present distress it is good for a person to remain as he is.**

- Paul is writing in a **particular era of history where persecution against Christians** is reaching a fever pitch. Christian families are being torn apart, sold into slavery, butchered in the arenas. Now, it is **difficult enough to go through persecution** as a single person, but when you’re married, your worldly troubles multiply! So Paul’s conclusion: **“During this time, if you’re not married, probably better to just remain single. You don’t want to be bringing a wife and kids into this mess.”**
- You say, “OK, **so that was then.**” But we are not in a particularly persecuted era of history right now. The mask thing is annoying, but it’s not like every other family is being fed to the lions. That’s true, and I believe in this context **Paul would encourage marriage** more than he did in that one.
- But, what it does mean is that there can be situations in your life that makes it more advantageous for you to wait. For example:
  - o You’re trying to finish your education.
  - o Trying to get established in your career.
  - o Maybe it’s a call to a mission assignment.
  - o Maybe you need healing from something in your life. A past relationship, past trauma. You should never wait until you are perfect to get married, but there can be situations where it is wiser to get yourself healthy before you attach yourself to someone else. There’s nothing wrong with that, and you should be wise, like Paul, to read the situation and know when it is wiser to be single. That’s one of the reasons you should be in close community in the church, because other people can help you see that.

Listen: there are times when marriage would hinder some of the good things what God wants to do in your life. If that is the case, take advantage of this chapter of your life! Don’t look at it as a curse, but a window of opportunity! I love the words of **Paige Benton Brown here:** **“I am not single because I am too spiritually unstable to possibly deserve a husband, nor because I am too spiritually mature to possibly need one. I am single because God is so abundantly good to me, because this is his best for me.”<sup>9</sup>**

Which leads me to #6...

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<sup>9</sup> Paige Benton Brown, “Singled out by God for Good,” quoted in Tim Keller, *The Meaning of Marriage*, 197.

## 5. When it's time, don't wait!

I love what Paul says in vs. **36** *If anyone thinks that he is not behaving properly toward his betrothed, if his passions are strong, and it has to be, let him do as he wishes: let them marry—it is no sin. If it has to be, get married.* But whatever you do, vs. 37, *“...be firmly established.”* Let me follow Paul's lead here and talk to the guys, since guys are usually the ones to take initiative in relationships. Guys: Be firmly established. Are you going to marry her or not? Don't be a jerk and flirt and call and hang out with her.

Well, I'm figuring it out. No, you're leading her on. You're keeping her close enough to enjoy her without having to sacrifice anything or love her like Jesus. You're taking and not giving. That's the opposite of the gospel. Stop it. Make up your mind. Pursue marriage intentionally or don't.

If you want to ask her out, be a man and ask her out. A lot of Christian guys like the “sneak-a-date” thing. Ladies, you know, where they figure out how to go out with you without having to man-up and go through the danger of **asking you out**. *“Oh, look, we're here together again.”* The **'sneak-a-date.'** Or the “friend-ationship”: *“We spend so much time together it's like we're boyfriend or girlfriend but we've never actually talked about it because that involves risk and a level of commitment.”* Stop that. Be a man. Be firmly established.

And if you're engaged, don't keep a **ring on her finger** with an elusive promise of marriage way out there. Either marry her or don't. Be firmly established. Don't string her along.

**And, guys, if you know it's not time to get married,** as in, you don't have a job, then quit leading her on, and get on with what God is doing in your singleness. Girls, you too—don't lead the guy on. **Dating is a road that leads to marriage, and if you're not ready for the destination, stay off the road!** Paul's point: **When it's time to wait on God—wait. When it's time to act,** go boldly into the land. Be strong and courageous.

(Now, guys, lest you misunderstand me: I'm not saying you need to move **super quickly** or **drop the marriage card** on your first date. And if she says “no,” respect that and leave her alone. Being firmly established should never be confused with creepiness or aggressiveness. The former leads the blessing of God; the latter to a restraining order. (Write that down!)

## 6. Reject the 'E-harmony' myth

**Nothing wrong with E-harmony.** But the myth is that if you can just find the perfect person you'll have the perfect marriage. And so you're almost paralyzed trying to find Mr. Perfect.

That's because we believe in what Tim Keller calls *'apocalyptic romance.'*

- **Every romantic movie** has the same plot: The life story begins just as two people are about to meet each other, and they realize everything in their lives have been leading up to this point. They exchange some witty banter, and then have a Disney-esque romantic affair where they find **true love**, and once they do the story fades out. The message is clear: **life begins and ends by finding romance.**<sup>10</sup>

Here's the problem. Psychologists say that “love, erotic, sexual enticement” stage lasts only between 6-24 months. (Which is the problem with a lot of Christian marriage books are built on trying to lengthen that process. You might lengthen it a little, or figure out ways to get it back temporarily. But it won't last forever.

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<sup>10</sup> Keller, *Meaning of Marriage*, 197.

Romance and marriage will never satisfy the deepest needs of your soul. I've said this before, but for most single guys, it's like they are drowning in a sea of loneliness, insecurity, boredom and despair...

The **way that most people idolize romance** leads to **terrible captivity**. Because you think marriage is essential to making you happy, You're terrified you will never find the right person, and if you are married, terrified that you married the wrong one.

The E-harmony myth is that **happiness in marriage depends on finding the perfect person**. But it's not **compatibility that makes for a happy marriage**; it's God's presence that makes for a happy marriage.

## 7. (Last one!) Never 'settle.'

- **Vs. 39** tells you to marry "only in the Lord."
- You cannot and should not marry a non-Christian. So, duh, you also should not date a non-Christian. Why on earth would you lead each other on when it literally can't work out? Ladies, this guy is going to be the **biggest influence on your children**, who will be more important to you than anything else on earth, in the ways of God. Don't settle for a guy who won't lead them spiritually. (I don't mean to be gender specific, as both genders have these same questions, but...) at around **age 25 a lot of girls freak out**... "I'm not married. Got to find a guy. Any guy will do."
- The most important question is, "Are they pursuing Jesus? Will they be the spiritual influence on your family that you need them to be?"
- If you are dating a non-Christian, maybe an even better question for you is, "Are you pursuing Jesus?" I'm having a hard time with you saying that you are pursuing Jesus when you are dating someone who is so clearly not part of God's plan for you. How can you become so close to, and make long-range life plans, with someone that doesn't even share your love for and faith in Jesus?
- And if you are not a Christian, and you feel like I'm being mean to you, let me talk to you for a minute. If you are not a Christian and have no intention of becoming one, do you really want to marry a Christian? **Here's why I ask: Because the Christian you are dating right now really wants to convert you.**
  - **LET ME PROVE IT: THEY HAVE YOU HERE TODAY.** They keep looking at you every once in a while to see if I'm connecting
  - Their whole family is praying for you (they know you're here), and nobody in the family is ever going to be really happy until you become a Christian. Their mom and dad are really concerned about her dating you and they have got a bunch of friends fasting and praying that you become a Christian, and they are never really going to like you dating her until you become a Christian.
  - I'm just being honest with you; I've observed this for many years.

## Conclusion:

So let me bring this back around to where we started. **Marriage and singleness are gifts. Temporary gifts for the fulfillment of God's purposes in your life.** If you're looking for something to satisfy the deep needs of your soul, it's not going to be found in marriage or singleness or a new marriage. It's going to be found in the love of God.

Christian, your identity is not "single" or "wife" or "father" or "mother." Those are TEMPORARY assignments and gifts. Your identity is "beloved child of God." Your primary family is not a biological one. It is the body of Christ.

Let read you something **John Piper wrote to singles:**

*God promises you blessings in the age to come that are better than the blessings of marriage and children.*

*I am not sentimentalizing singleness to make the unmarried feel good. I am declaring the temporary and secondary nature of marriage over against the eternal and primary nature of the church..*

*Marriage is a temporary institution, but what it stands for lasts forever... I say it again to all singles in Christ: God promises you blessings in the age to come that are better than the blessings of marriage and children. ...Marriage is temporary, and finally gives way to the relationship to which it was pointing all along: Christ and the church—at which point marriage fades away. It becomes unnecessary, the way you no longer need a picture of someone when you see them face to face...<sup>11</sup>*

**Marriage is not what you are looking for. God, and his people, are what you are looking for.**

You say, ***“But I don’t want to be alone RIGHT NOW. I’m tired of being alone.”*** You’re not supposed to be alone. God created you NOT to be alone—but marriage is not the only way, or even the ultimate way, we experience companionship. God gave us the church.

**Rebecca McLaughlin**, whom we’ve had here at the church, says, ***You won’t wither without sex; you will wither without friend and family connection.***<sup>12</sup>

For those of my brothers and sisters with SSA who feel like they can’t be married—I know a lot of people with SSA who have gotten married to someone of the opposite sex and found a measure of healing—but for those of you that just can’t... you can still have a full and meaningful life. Like I said, the most fulfilled, perfect person who ever walked the face of the earth was celibate. And he was happy and joyful and deeply fulfilled.

If for some reason you can’t be married, God didn’t create you to be alone. The relationships God created you for, the forever family, is here in the church.

**So invest deeply here. To THE CHURCH, let me say this: we have a responsibility to singles** in our midst, and that is to invite them into our families:

- First, see them as the treasures Paul saw them as. Don’t treat them like a project you need to fix.
- **But be aware that their particular calling** has some of its accompanying challenges and **invite them into** your family to experience relationships there. Invite them to **join you in key moments**. **Not** just to come over and babysit your kids or help you move, by the way. *And all God’s singles said...*
- We’ve had **single friends** from the church go on vacation with us, do Thanksgiving with us. One even spent last Christmas with us. Stayed at our house on Christmas Eve and got up with us on Christmas morning

Hoc est corpus christi

## MUSIC VAMP

Every head bowed... What is the Holy Spirit saying to you?

Have you given your life to Jesus? Surrendered to do things his way? I have good news for you today: Whoever you are, whatever you’ve done, God is ready to receive you into his family. He sent his Son to die on a cross to

<sup>11</sup> <http://www.desiringgod.org/resource-library/sermons/single-in-christ-a-name-better-than-sons-and-daughters>

<sup>12</sup> *Confronting Christianity*

pay for your sin so he can offer you forgiveness and cleansing and new life if you're ready to receive it. Have you? You can right now. Pray with me. Text **READY to 33933**

[Missional Blessing + Send]