



SINGLE-MINDED DEVOTION

OPENING COMMENT

Singleness in the church community is often an overlooked and ultimately under appreciated gift. A significant amount of our time is spent seeking opportunities to marry that the strengths of singleness are, at best, squandered, and at worst mocked. Yet Paul's view is radically different than our current cultural perspective, which is a result of correctly prioritizing the Christian life.

READ THE TEXT: 1 Corinthians 7:32-40

³² I want you to be free from anxieties. The unmarried man is anxious about the things of the Lord, how to please the Lord. ³³ But the married man is anxious about worldly things, how to please his wife, ³⁴ and his interests are divided. 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. ³⁵ I say this for your own benefit, not to lay any restraint upon you, but to promote good order and to secure your undivided devotion to the Lord.

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. ³⁷ But whoever is firmly established in his heart, being under no necessity but having his desire under control, and has determined this in his heart, to keep her as his betrothed, he will do well. ³⁸ So then he who marries his betrothed does well, and he who refrains from marriage will do even better.

³⁹ A wife is bound to her husband as long as he lives. But if her husband dies, she is free to be married to whom she wishes, only in the Lord. ⁴⁰ Yet in my judgment she is happier if she remains as she is. And I think that I too have the Spirit of God.



UNDERSTANDING THE TEXT

1. Paul outlines the difference between the married and the single in verses 32 - 34. What does Paul see as the primary difference between the two groups of people?
2. What is Paul's intention for singling out this distinction? (vs. 35)
3. What is the underlying motivation that determines whether to be married or single? (vs. 36 - 37).
4. In light of verses 32-37 why does Paul designate singleness as the better option of the two good options in verse 38?
5. What are the principles Paul applies to marriage, remarriage, and the single? (vs. 39a, 39b, 40, respectively)

APPLYING THE TEXT

1. Paul looks at marriage as something that divides our attention between our spouse and the Lord. What other good things in life have the potential to cause the same type of distraction?
2. In light of these distractions, how might we "secure our undivided devotion to the Lord"?
3. How does viewing marriage in the manner Paul outlines in this passage reframe our understanding of marriage and singleness?
4. How might we orient our lives to more accurately reflect Paul's overarching statement (marriage is good, singleness is better) in verse 38?
5. What impact would this reorientation have on our church community?

BIBLICAL THREAD

1. Isaiah 54:4-6 - God is Israel's (and by Christ now our) husband
2. Matthew 19:10-11 - Disciples understand Jesus teaching on marriage and say it is better to be single. Jesus confirms this as a gift.
3. 1 Corinthians 7:6-9 - Paul wishes all were as he was.
4. Revelation 19:7 - We all have a perfect marriage to look forward to for eternity.



CONCLUSION

Paul is utterly convinced that the primary focus and ultimate priority of the Christian life is devotion to God. He desires for the Corinthian church to view all of their life circumstances from this vantage point. The question in Paul's mind is not "should I be married or single", but how do I most honour, glorify, and obey God. From this vantage point we might begin to correctly see the strengths and weaknesses of our relationship status and endeavour to use them to glorify our Saviour.

SHARE & PRAY

LIFE GROUP VISION:

The goal to meeting together around the word of God is three fold. First, we want to more clearly understand what God is saying to us through his Word and apply it to our own hearts and minds. Secondly, we want to build a loving community with each other to disciple one another toward maturity in Christ. Thirdly, we desire each of us, as ambassadors of Christ, to look outwards to our community and ask how we can bring the truth of the gospel to bear on those whom God has placed in our lives.

