



World Christian Fellowship

www.wcflondon.com
wcflondon@gmail.com

Marriage and Divorce Being Single

What does the Bible have to say about being single?
How are we to understand singleness, this unique design by God for some of you?

God has designed the relationship of marriage to be the most common expression of human life in an intimate social way. Marriage is the only relationship in which sexual intimacy can take place at all.

But it is not the only design of God. God designed that some people be unmarried.

It is also fitting into God's will and God's purpose.

1 Corinthians 7:7-9, *For I wish that all men were even as I myself. But each one has his own gift from God, one in this manner and another in that.*

⁸*But I say to the unmarried and to the widows: It is good for them if they remain even as I am;* ⁹*but if they cannot exercise*

self-control, let them marry. For it is better to marry than to burn with passion.

Three categories we can see.

- ✓ Unmarried, (Divorced)
- ✓ Widowed, and
- ✓ Virgins.

Paul tells us that he is single with great blessing to the degree that he could wish that to the unmarried. The unmarried here is likely a reference to those who have been divorced, because it's differentiated from virgins who would be those never married.

In Paul's case, singleness was a great blessing.

But if they do not have self-control, let them marry.

It is better to marry than to continually burn with lust, such temptation obviously is more than one can bear.

Paul is here offering himself as an example of the fulfilment of being single. Since the apostle includes himself in a discussion of the unmarried and the widowed, it is very likely that he has been married but no longer is. Most likely his wife had died. Some have suggested that because he was a member of the Sanhedrin he would have at once had to have been married since that was a requirement, and now his singleness would mean that his wife had died.

It is a gift of God to be able to live singly, it is a gift of God to be married. I wish that all could enjoy the blessings of singleness, but such gift God has not given to all. But to those to whom it is given to be single, singleness is a very special benediction from the Spirit of God for His glory and the advancement of the Kingdom and the blessing of the church. Now in this chapter the virtues and blessings and the importance of singleness is clearly given to us.

1 Corinthians 7:25-29, *Now concerning virgins: I have no commandment from the Lord; yet I give judgment as one whom the Lord in His mercy has made trustworthy. ²⁶I suppose therefore that this is good because of the present distress—that it is good for a man to remain as he is: ²⁷Are you bound to a wife? Do not seek to be loosed. Are you loosed from a wife? Do not seek a wife. ²⁸But even if you do marry, you have not sinned; and if a virgin marries, she has not sinned. Nevertheless such will have trouble in the flesh, but I would spare you.*

²⁹*But this I say, brethren, the time is short, so that from now on even those who have wives should be as though they had none,*

V25-26, Apostle Paul is saying that he can't quote Jesus. There is nothing in the gospel record or in any other record that has been laid down regarding the teaching of Jesus in which He refers to the benefits of singleness.

But I can give you a viewpoint as one who representative of the Lord, I am an apostle, I speak the truth as the Spirit of God reveals it to me. I can be trusted to give you wise counsel.

It is good to be single.

That's exactly what he said back in verse 8.

Some of you have the gift of singleness and these are most suitable to you.

Some of you are in the condition of singleness though you are positive you don't have the gift.

You are not married, and you don't like it.

You are divorced and you don't like it.

You are widowed and you don't like it.

You really need a partner.

Nonetheless, in the current state that you are in you must understand the benefits that come to you if only for the short term.

If you are single and you don't have the gift and your life is as it should be before God, that God will fulfil your desire. Until then, and you don't want to rush into anything, but enjoy the benefits of being single.

1. Present Distress

V 26, ²⁶*I suppose therefore that this is good because of the present distress—that it is good for a man to remain as he is:*

Luke 21:23, *But woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days! For there will be great distress in the land and wrath upon this people.*

2 Corinthians 6:4, *But in all things we commend ourselves as ministers of God: in much patience, in tribulations, in needs, in distresses,*

2 Corinthians 12:10, *Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong.*

1 Thessalonians 3:7, *therefore, brethren, in all our affliction and distress we were comforted concerning you by your faith.*

In other words, there is just difficulty in life. There is the present distress that comes against God's people.

Paul is thinking of painful and violent distress that may come at any time on anyone who confesses Jesus Christ as Lord. Paul was talking about the imminent persecution that is going to fall upon the Corinthians.

2 Corinthians 11 is the fine example of his own suffering in the Gospel.

He knew his enemies were all over the place, they were plotting against him and he knew that he was hanging, , by the fragile thread of God's sovereignty. If his enemies had their way, they would gladly cut it and send him into death. He knew what it was to live under tremendous persecution.

Realizing the tremendous implications of all of that on a loving wife and loving children, he could see the value of being single. The days of persecution were escalating, and he knew it.

A married person with a family would have far more intense suffering, far more intense sorrow, far more intense loss in the circle of that family.

If the persecution extended to the whole family, the pain and the suffering and the agony would be so profound.

Paul is saying there is a benefit in a time of distress, a time of violence, a time of persecution, there is a benefit to having no wife and having no children so that you do not live in constant fear for their lives.

Within fifteen years from the writing of this letter that the first general persecution by the Roman Emperor Nero would break

out against Christians. Erastus, the chamberlain, that's a city official of Corinth was among those who perished in this persecution.

When that persecution began it lasted for over 200 years. Paul had to this escalating persecution which already was beginning, he said my advice is if you're single, consider it a blessing because you will not have the fear and the dread that comes when you have a wife and a family in time of great persecution.

Paul also doesn't want to be misunderstood.

V 27, Are you bound to a wife? Do not seek to be loosed. Are you loosed from a wife? Do not seek a wife.

To stop anyone from divorcing their spouse he immediately says if you are bound to a wife, don't seek to be released.

But if you are released from a wife think about staying that way.

This point is made to the divorced:

Since Paul does not have to write to someone who have never been married.

You don't need to make this point to the widows because they are already without a partner.

But you do need to make it to those who are married and those who are divorced.

If you are married, stay that way.

If you are divorced and now single, stay that way.

If that's your state, stay in it.

Well that's fine for the apostle Paul living in a time of impending violence, distress, disaster and persecution, but what about us?

There are more Christians being executed for the gospel of Christ today than at any time in the church's history.

Paul is simply making that point. Singleness is not bad, it is good when you think about the distress that can come against God's people.

For those who are single, consider it a blessing at the time.

For those who have the gift of singleness, consider it something from God intended to preserve you from some of the distress.

2. Problems in Flesh

V28, *But even if you do marry, you have not sinned; and if a virgin marries, she has not sinned. Nevertheless such will have trouble in the flesh, but I would spare you.*

V9, but if they cannot exercise self-control, let them marry. For it is better to marry than to burn with passion.

Paul is saying that, you are going to have trouble in this life, or you are going to have trouble in the flesh.

Paul never was against marriage.

He didn't see marriage as sinful.

He didn't see it as evil.

He is saying if you marry, that's not sin. Marriage is still the majority state. It is still an institution of God. It is still the grace of life. It is a good thing.

But those who marry will have trouble. Now he doesn't define the word "trouble," but he just says, "trouble in this life."

What trouble is he talking about?

The most miserable people in the world are not single. It's true. The most miserable people in the world are married.

That does not mean that all married people are miserable, I am not. I am thrilled and very happy.

The potential for misery in marriage is greater than the potential for misery being single because when you are single there is only one person who can make you miserable.

All marriages have difficulty, hardship, sacrifice because you have two people who are human, who are fallen, and they are pressed so tightly together.

Please, if you're single, do not look at marriage as the solution to your trouble.

It probably is the multiplication of it.

Marriage intensifies human weakness because it puts you under such intimate scrutiny.

Sometimes young people say, "You know, I have strong desires sexually and if I can just get married." That is not in itself a sufficient reason to get married. Even after marriage there is no guarantee that your sexual desire will go away.

Some people say, "Well I'm lonely, I need to get married cause I am lonely." They get married and often are far more lonely after married than before because somebody so close becomes so indifferent, and that is crushing.

Marriage is the solution to only one thing, just one, and that is this, the will of God.

If God wants you married and for all the right reasons in your heart you believe that's His purpose for you, pursue it.

3. Passing of the World

Verses 29-31, *But this I say, brethren, the time is short, so that from now on even those who have wives should be as though they had none,³⁰ those who weep as though they did not weep, those who rejoice as though they did not rejoice, those who buy as though they did not possess,³¹ and those who use this world as not misusing it. For the form of this world is passing away.*

Marriage has no relationship to eternity.

Marriage is part of the passing world. Paul says the time is short, this set time is passing away.

James 4:14, *whereas you do not know what will happen tomorrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away.*

Marriage is a part of that very short vapor, it's a part of that very brief time. It suits us wonderfully and richly for this life but has no connection to eternity. It is God's design that we attach lightly to earthly things.

Colossians 3:2, *Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth.*

I don't think it means become so spiritual, so godly and so consumed with ministry that you ignore your life partner or your family. It simply means you must give to marriage a perspective that it belongs to a passing time.

Will I not love my partner in heaven?

Of course, but you'll have perfect love toward everyone.

Will I not know my partner in heaven?

Of course, with perfect knowledge the likes of which you've never even experienced.

But understand the relationship you have now for physical fulfilment, for procreation and for joy is part of temporal life.

Paul gives several examples of what is passing.

Marriage is passing.

Marriage will give way to heavenly family life with God the Father, Christ the husband and all believers the wife.

Weeping will cease because God's going to wipe away all tears. Earthly joy will fade into an eternal joy.

Earthly joy which comes and goes and ebbs and flows and rises and falls will disappear into the eternal joy of heaven.

Buying will cease since we will inherit everything in the entire new heaven and new earth and lack nothing.

We will never need to buy anything.

Worldly pleasure, those who use the world, that will be replaced by the thrills of everlasting life in the presence of God and Christ.

So, Paul is just saying marriage, weeping, earthly rejoicing, buying, worldly pleasure, all a part of the passing scene.

Sometimes Christian people in our contemporary scene today spend an undue amount of time working on their marriage instead of a healthy amount of time working on their spiritual life which takes care of their marriage.

The godlier and the more Christlike I am, the better it is to live with me and the more fulfilling, more enriching, and more enjoyable.

Marriage is a sacred thing. It is a picture of Christ's relationship to the church, but it becomes what it ought to be when two people are solely and singularly devoted to Jesus Christ.

4. Concern for Godly Thing

Verses 32-34, *But I want you to be without care. He who is unmarried cares for the things of the Lord—how he may please the Lord.* ³³*But he who is married cares about the things of the world—how he may please his wife.* ³⁴*There is a difference*

between a wife and a virgin. The unmarried woman cares about the things of the Lord, that she may be holy both in body and in spirit. But she who is married cares about the things of the world—how she may please her husband.

The wonderful gift of singleness allows for undivided service to Christ. The shift takes place from human problems and pressures to the spiritual dimension.

One old saying:

"A man who is a hero by himself becomes a coward when he thinks of his widowed wife and his orphan children."

When you are married and have family, you are distracted, and you are divided. Whereas the unmarried man can concentrate on those things that belong to the Lord and concentrate on how he may please the Lord.

Luke 14:20, *Still another said, 'I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come.'*

Paul is not saying that married people think only of the world. That's not true. He is simply saying what he says that his interests are divided.

If you have the gift of singleness, it is a great blessing. If you are single and for the time can endure it until the Lord answers your faithful prayers and brings you a partner, rejoice in the

fact that you may spend your attention on the single purposes of God's glory.

1 Timothy 5:11 & 14, *But refuse the younger widows; for when they have begun to grow wanton against Christ, they desire to marry,*

¹⁴Therefore I desire that the younger widows marry, bear children, manage the house, give no opportunity to the adversary to speak reproachfully.

Those who don't have the gift of singleness, God expects them to pursue marriage.

But for those who can be single, either because they are gifted for it or because they are older and do not have the strength of those youthful desires, it is a very noble path to take.

As Christians, the supreme desire of our heart should be to please the Lord. When you get married you must filter that through your concern for a partner and a family.

V 35, its not a condition or a burden.

And this I say for your own profit, not that I may put a leash on you, but for what is proper, and that you may serve the Lord without distraction.

Get the virgins married.

V36-38, *But if any man thinks he is behaving improperly toward his virgin, if she is past the flower of youth, and thus it must be, let him do what he wishes. He does not sin; let them marry.* ³⁷*Nevertheless he who stands steadfast in his heart, having no necessity, but has power over his own will, and has so determined in his heart that he will keep his virgin, does well.* ³⁸*So then he who gives her in marriage does well, but he who does not give her in marriage does better.*

In those early times, both among the Hebrews and Christians, the daughters were wholly in the power of the father, so that he might give or not give them in marriage as he chose.

He might bind them to perpetual celibacy if he thought proper. If the father had devoted his daughter to perpetual virginity, and he afterwards found that she had fixed her affections upon a person whom she was strongly inclined to marry and was now getting past the prime of life.

He, seeing from his daughter's circumstances that it would be wrong to force her to continue in her state of celibacy. Though he had determined before to keep her single, yet he might in this case alter his purpose without sin and let her and her suitor marry.

5. Lifelong commitment of marriage

V 39-40, *A wife is bound by law as long as her husband lives; but if her husband dies, she is at liberty to be married to whom she wishes, only in the Lord. ⁴⁰But she is happier if she remains as she is, according to my judgment—and I think I also have the Spirit of God.*

Marriage is permanent. You are bound as long as your partner lives.

Once you're married, that's it until death.

A single person has liberty, but as soon as he marries, or she marries, that liberty ends, and you are bound to a person as long as you live.

"Does this forbid divorce?"

No!

God hates divorce, divorce does happen.

That is the exception to the rule!

1. Apart from unrepentant adultery and
2. An unbeliever departing.

So, you are married till one die.

Matthew 19:10, *His disciples said to Him, "If such is the case of the man with his wife, it is better not to marry."*

So, there is no reason to engage in a lifelong tie that can only be severed by death. You will have all the pressures, all the

trouble, all the divided interest all your life long. You need to be certain that it is God's design.

Romans 7:2-4, *For the woman who has a husband is bound by the law to her husband as long as he lives. But if the husband dies, she is released from the law of her husband. ³So then if, while her husband lives, she marries another man, she will be called an adulteress; but if her husband dies, she is free from that law, so that she is no adulteress, though she has married another man. ⁴Therefore, my brethren, you also have become dead to the law through the body of Christ, that you may be married to another—to Him who was raised from the dead, that we should bear fruit to God.*

The most wonderful, the most fulfilling, the richest and most blessed of partnerships, but it is for life and you need to understand that going in.

Should a person stay single?

Well, if you have that gift.

If marriage is not a pressing necessity, if you do not burn with that physical desire, yes.

Or if you have been married and now are either divorced or widowed and no longer have that driving need, consider remaining single.

If you are single for the time but feel it is a very unfulfilling, uncomfortable and even tempting situation, consider the great benefits of your current singleness and be the man or woman that God wants you to be and wait on Him to provide the answer to your prayers. But don't look down on singleness as if somehow, it's a second-class life, it is not.

Conclusion:

There is a great benefit being single by which you can focus with great devotion to Christ, then why is it that God has designed that preachers marry and have families?

Wouldn't it be simpler if they Pastors were single?

Preaching is only one part of ministry and being an example is another part of it.

Normal pattern God has designed for most people is to be married and to enjoy the bliss and the thrill of marriage. Raise up godly young people to provide righteousness in the next generation. Since that is God's normal desire, He had put

people in the leadership to the hands of married people and families who not only can teach them about that but who can model that for them.

I am glad I am married!

I was never designed to be single.

I thank God for my wife.

My wife actually believes I ought to live everything I preach all the time.

Is that ridiculous?

But that kind of accountability is highly profitable to me.