

"Single, Pure, Serving and Happy"

1 Cor 7:25-38

Celebrating the Centrality of Christ in the Local Assembly

At some point in time everyone is confronted with the question, "Will I ever get married?", as if marriage is the ideal. Yet there are perhaps two other questions that need to be asked and answered. First, "Why should I get married?" Secondly, "Why would I stay single?"

It is inside the larger context of our passage (chapters 5-7) that Paul answers for us the above questions. There is no question that Paul is dealing with two groups of people: the married and the single.

Paul's propensity toward being single is found throughout the chapter (7:7, 8, 26, 29, 32, 38-40). There are four primary ideas in Paul's total discussion concerning singles found in chapters 5, 6 and 7.

I. If you are single, you are to be morally pure (5:11, 6:9, 10, 7:1)

If you are single, moral purity is not optional. As noted in chapter 6, you and I have no right to destroy through immorality that which is not ours. When we live immoral lives we are defrauding the Lord. God has called some to be single, but He has called us all to moral purity. Some have the gift of being single and exhibit self-control. First Corinthians 7:7 speaks of being single as a gift from God. Remember Matthew 19:10-12?

Not being married is as much a gift from God as is marriage. The church has not handled singles very well. We almost expect everyone to be married and have children, but this is not God's design. Because of this expectation, we have placed a burden on people they were not designed to bear. They live with fear and guilt. Friend, celebrate your singleness. Thank God for it. We as a fellowship must embrace the single and must be enablers so that they live within the protection of this local church fellowship.

Our passage in 1 Corinthians 7:25-40 lays out three ideas and one, I believe, is the emphasis.

II. All of God's people are to live in light of eternity (vv. 26, 29-31)

Whether you are single or married, you are to have an eternal perspective. This world is not our home, we are only passing through. There is a sense in which we are in the world, but not of the world. We possess without being possessed. As the people of God, we cannot afford to live monastic lives. Although Christians are in the world, but not of the world, we

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must still engage the world.

Our next section of verses highlights what I believe to be the primary emphasis of the passage.

III. Singles can offer an undistracted devotion to the Lord (vv. 32-35).

As I have already noted, those who are married must care for the things of this world in order that they may take care of their spouse and their children. However, those who are single can live lives separated from the world and completely to God.

a. Free from concern (vv. 32, 33)

The statement, “free from concern” means “without care.” It is a negation of the word “anxious” or “care”. This particular word is only used twice in the NT (Matt 28:14). The root word, however, is found in several other references and its occurrences are telling (Matt 13:22, Mk 4:19, Lk 8:14, 21:34, 2 Cor 11:28, 1 Pt 5:7).

Notice the power of this “care”. It can rob you of the Word of God and the joy of Christ. Those who are married must guard themselves against this assault on their relationships with God, spouse, and children.

Paul’s argument is that we should strive for simplicity in order that we might give undistracted devotion to the Lord.

b. Undistracted devotion (v. 35)

The word used by Paul in 1 Corinthians 7:35 for “undistracted” is interesting. The word “devotion” means to wait on or attend to. It literally means “well sitting beside.” Paul’s conclusion to the whole matter is found in verses 36-38.

IV. If you get married you do well, but if you stay single you do better (vv. 36-38)

The contrast between well and better is not one of morality or righteousness, it is one of opportunity. The single person has the opportunity to serve God with undistracted devotion. The married person has different opportunities in serving God, but they are not the same as the single person.