



Calvary of Albuquerque

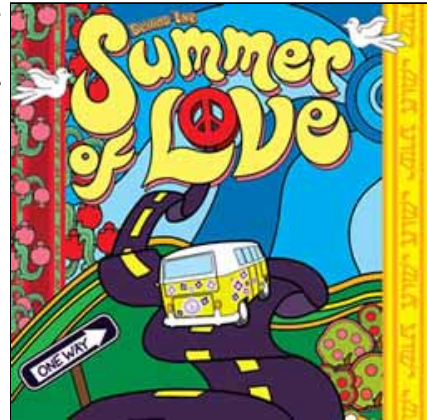
Single For Life? - Matthew 19:11-12; 1 Corinthians 7:17-24

From the Series, Beyond the Summer of Love

By Pastor Brian Nixon

MESSAGE SUMMARY

The 1960's were one of the most epic of generations in Modern Times: Summer of Love, Man on the Moon, Vietnam, Music, Art, Politics. Yet what many people forget is that the 1960's were the flowering of the T.V game show. The Price is Right, I've Got a Secret (Steve Allen), Truth or Consequences (Bob Barker), Concentration (Hugh Downs), and of course, The Dating Game and The Match Game. The basic gist of most of these programs consisted of answering a question or making a guess at a question. Then usually at the end someone gets to go for the big prize, the "Million Dollar" question, if you will. We are going to play our own version of Match Game. I will show a picture of a famous person from history, you will shout out their name, and if you are really good, tell me what they did. And like most of the games, there will be the final, "Million Dollar" question at the end.



DETAILED NOTES

I. Quiz (images of these people shown on screen to guess)

- Leonardo Da Vinci- painter
- Michelangelo- sculpture and painter
- Queen Elizabeth of England
- Isaac Newton, famous scientist
- Jane Austen- author
- Helen Keller- teacher and author
- Susan B. Anthony- schoolteacher and abolitionist
- John Stott, author and Pastor, voted one of time magazine's 100 most influential Christians.
- Condoleezza Rice- former Secretary of State.

Now, for the "Million Dollar" question: What do the following people have in common?

If you answered that they were all single people, never, or yet to be married, you are correct: you won!

II. Singleness

In our contemporary age, the word "singleness" can bring fear or pure elation.

You may hear some proclaim, "I am so happy I have never been married. I mean, look at what married people go through. I am a bachelor for life."

On the other hand you hear people state, "How I wish I were married. Life is not fulfilled until I have my soul mate"

According to Webster's dictionary, a single person is "one who is not married, or "one who is unaccompanied by others."

Let me say on the offset this definition offered by Webster's is not totally true, at least for the Christian. Notice two words in these definitions: not married and unaccompanied. Why would I say this is not biblically true?

- First, all Christians- in a Spiritual sense- are married. We are married to Christ, we, as His church, are His bride. See Revelation 21 and 22.
- Second, we are accompanied. As Christians Christ is with us, He will never leave or forsake us, regardless of our marital status.

If these are not fully accurate portraits of a single life, what is? I suggest that the Bible has the clearest picture.

III. Tonight we are going to look at what the Bible has to say about singleness, and what I yearn for you to do is to the best of your ability, put aside your own thoughts (not because they are not important), but because I want you to hear what the Bible has to say about this important subject.

To help us in our understanding, we will look at two main passages on singleness: one given by the Lord, Jesus in Matthew. The second offered by Paul in I Corinthians. As we go through them, I will offer a few key principles from each.

IV. Jesus: Matthew 19: 10-12- Read the text

Four Observations:

- *First*, notice the context: relationships. Jesus is discussing marriage and singleness. Relationships have been an issue from creation.
- *Second*, notice what it does not say: Jesus isn't stating that singleness is wrong. He doesn't say, "Marry for marriages sake, marry a tree, a rock, but for heaven's sake- get married!" Jesus didn't hire matchmakers- like in Fiddler on the Roof- to get his disciples married.
 - This is an important facet to notice. Why? Because in the ancient Jewish world of Jesus' day singleness was frowned upon, only one who was married received the full blessing of God.
 - As a matter of fact, in some Jewish circles, it was a sin for a man not to have a wife; it was one of the major sins, preventing a man from entering heaven.
- *Third*, notice the word: Eunuch. What exactly is a eunuch?
 - Two biblical definitions:
 - He who is assistant to the king or ruler or court officer
 - A castrate
 - Ancient Judaism (Babylonian Talmud) recognized two classes of eunuchs:
 - Natural
 - Man-made
 - In the Bible eunuch's had a semi-reputable position:
 - Jeremiah 34- describes them as men of rank
 - 1 Kings- were important messengers
 - 2 Kings- were warriors, taken into captivity.
 - What is fascinating is that, as we will see, Jesus adds a third designation for a eunuch.
- *Forth*, notice verse 11: the phrase, "but only those to whom it has been given." Singleness is a God-called gift. God, according to His purposes, has called some to a life of singleness.

Three Reasons for Singleness:

1. **Nature.** Those because of a mental or physical reason. Eunuch's born from their mother's womb.
 - Now let me make some clarifying points: just because someone has a physical defect, does not mean that they are called to a life of singleness.
2. **Man.** Those who have been physically harmed. The context here is castration, and while uncommon today, it was common in the ancient world. Principally, it could mean that someone remains single do to outside circumstances: taking care of parents, etc.
 - Likewise, just because someone has been harmed in a private manner- or has difficult circumstances- does not necessarily mean they will be single.
3. **God.** Those who have renounced marriage for the purpose of serving God more fully: "who have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven."

Main Points: I don't think Jesus is offering decisive points of singleness, rather he is making a point: *some are single because of events beyond their control; others are single because God called them to a life of singleness.*

V. Paul: I Corinthians 7: 17-24- Read verse 17.

- Context: Like Jesus, Paul is discussing relationships: divorce and singles.
- As mentioned above the Jewish understanding of marriage was not too great. Likewise, the Gentile understanding had its own problems: for some, marriage was the highest state of honor, usually involving multiple wives. For other, marriage was a state of dishonor, stressing asceticism.
- What Paul explains here in Corinthians 7- like Jesus- is that both extremes are incorrect; rather than exalt or belittling marriage, one must determine what he or she is called to do. Put it this way: it is not about relationships, per say, but about obedience to God's call on your life- as we will see below.
- **Four Preliminary Considerations: Key Principles:**
 - First, do as God has called. **Verse 17:** "But as God has distributed"- God has given certain callings, He has distributed; He has called each one to different functions in life. As many of you are familiar, in chapter 12 of I Corinthians, Paul likens us to a body, each given a role in the body of Christ. Read 12: 12-26

- the word "called" means to "bid or bring forth"
 - Second, "So walk."
 - the word, "walk," is peripateo. It means to live or be occupied with. In this case, we are to be occupied with our calling, how God has distributed to us our role in His body.
 - Third, **verse 20**: "keep the commandments." In an ultimate sense, it is not about marriage or singleness; but about following God in what He has called you to do in this stage of your life.
 - Forth, **verse 24**: we need to "remain in the same calling in which he was called." Paul states we need to be obedient to that calling until God shows us otherwise.
 - what this text is not saying is that God can't call you to something different in your life. Maybe as a teenager you said, "I want to go on the mission field and serve God only." Then- while on the mission field you meet "Mr. Right." Well does this mean you can't marry him? Certainly not. The important thing to do is pray, seek counsel, and wisdom for God's word, and then obey.
 - The point here is that Paul is saying if you are ultimately called to singleness: remain single, and if you are ultimately called to marriage, stay married.
- **Key Considerations When Thinking Through Singleness**
 - **Verses 32- 35**: Marriage keeps us focused on material things: family, food, money, shelter (see versus 25-39): "But he who is married cares about the things of the world" (verse 33).
 - **Verse 38**: Singleness frees us up to serve openly, and without worldly restraints. Notice Paul's words in verse 38: "But he who does not give to marriage does better."
 - the word better here is kereisson, it means, "greater advantage." What Paul is communicating is that when one remains single, they have a greater advantage to serve God without the restraints of the world.

VI. Wisdom From One That Chose: John Stott

- "The gift of singleness is more a vocation than an empowerment, although to be sure God is faithful in supporting those he calls."
- "If marriage is good, singleness is also good. It's an example of the balance of Scripture that, although Genesis 2:18 indicates that it is good to marry, I Corinthians 7:1... So both the married and the single states are good, neither is in itself better or worse than the other."
- "So whether we are single or married, we need to receive our situation from God as his own special grace gift to us."
- Advice to a single person: "First, don't be in too great a hurry to get married. Pray daily that God will guide you to your life partner or show you if he wants you to remain single. Second, lead a normal social life. Develop many friendships. Third, if God calls you to singleness, don't fight it. Remember the key text: 'Each person has his or her own gift of God's grace.'"

VII. Spiritual Singleness- the Gospel