

# Get Prequalified—The Minimalist Home

1 Corinthians 7; Matthew 19

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# connect groups

## **PATH** //

Should the top priority of a single person be to get married? Can a *Smart Home* also be a minimalistic home—with just *one* occupant? Why is it that singleness is sometimes considered less acceptable than marriage? Can the single life be a full, enriching, and positive experience? Perhaps you've lost your mate or you're still waiting to find one. Or maybe you're happy to stay single. Today let's consider singleness and celibacy in light of Scripture.

I. The Single Life (1 Corinthians 7:1)

II. The Celibate Life (Matthew 19:11-12)

III. The Sensible Life (1 Corinthians 7:27-28)

## **POINTS** //

### **Separation**

- According to the *Washington Post*, there are 109 million unmarried Americans over eighteen.<sup>1</sup> This is the largest number in recorded history.
- In light of Scripture, singleness is okay. It's normal.
- Christians in the Corinthian culture struggled like Christians today. Corinthian culture was corrupt and morally tolerant.
- To "touch a woman" (v. 1) was a Jewish expression that meant to have sexual intercourse. It may be that Jewish Christians pressured single Gentile Christians to get married.
- But Paul said it's good for a person to remain single.
- He was establishing that singleness is good behavior, not inferior. But Paul included a couple of clarifiers:
  - Singleness is good when it involves celibacy.
  - Marriage is also good, but it's not the only good.
- Singleness has many practical advantages; it allows for greater flexibility and freedom.
- There are a lot of single heroes in Scripture. Consider the following:
  - Joseph was the prime minister of Egypt and saved the world from famine—as a single person.
  - Daniel was the third most powerful person in Babylon and gave insight to its ruler—as a single person.
  - Amos was a prophet who influenced Israel in the eighth century BC—as a single person.
  - Elijah was a prophet who stood single-handedly for God—as a single person.
  - John the Baptist was the forerunner of Jesus, who called him the greatest man

ever born (see Matthew 11:11)—as a single person.

- Paul was a missionary, church planter, and Bible teacher—as a single person.
- Jesus accomplished salvation for entire world—as a single person.
- More modern single Christian leaders include David Brainerd, Robert M'Cheyne, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, and John Stott.

### **The Celibate Life**

- The Jewish culture the disciples grew up in was rampant with divorce. Yet Jesus properly interpreted marriage and single life.
- Jesus mentioned three categories of celibacy that were common in ancient history:
  - Eunuchs from birth: those with congenital deformities that prevented them from having children.
  - Eunuchs made by man: those who were castrated, such as harem guards.
  - Self-made eunuchs (celibate singles): those who voluntarily chose celibacy for the kingdom of heaven. Why would someone do this? Because they have the gift of celibacy.
- These categories show us two things:
  - A single life can't be accomplished apart from a gift, an enablement.
  - If you have this gift, you know it, either by nature or choice.
- How can you tell if you're called to celibacy? You won't "burn with passion" (1 Corinthians 7:9).
- But remember this, as John Stott stated: "The Bible doesn't indicate...that either gift is necessarily permanent. Just because someone is single now doesn't mean they always will be, and just because one is married now doesn't mean they will always will be."

- Jesus said, "He who is able to accept it, let him accept it" (v. 12).

### **The Sensible Life**

- We should cherish singleness as a blessing from God and recognize its many advantages.
- And remember: it's not wrong to get married, as long as it's to a fellow believer.
- And though it is "not good that man should be alone" (Genesis 2:18), marriage can bring trouble, conflicts, demands, and hardships—things singleness may or may not have.
- We must learn to be content whether single or married.
- One must be called by God to long-term singleness and then kept by God. Just as it's wrong to be married and act single, so, too, is it wrong to be single and act married.
- Here's advice for the married person: don't discount, demote, or overlook single, divorced, or widowed people. Include them in social activities and encourage them in their walk.
- Here's advice for the single person: don't waste singleness. Throw yourself into God's plan for your life. There may be no other time when you'll be as free to serve as now.
- Ann Kiemel Anderson wrote this prayer: "Jesus, if this is Your will, then yes to being single. In my deepest heart I want to marry, to belong to a great man, to know I am linked to his life...and he to mine... following Christ and our dreams together... but You know what I need. If I never marry, it is yes to You."
- The single life can be good, the celibate life must be a gift, and the sensible life is the goal.

## **PRACTICE** //

**Connect Up:** Consider Jesus as the greatest example of singleness. How did He live and interact with people as a single man? If you're single, how can you imitate Jesus' life of singleness? If you're married, what can you learn from His life of singleness? And what does singleness tell you about God the Father?

**Connect In:** One writer called singles "the lepers of today's church,"<sup>2</sup> as they are often forgotten or made to feel odd. Discuss ways the church can be a more welcoming place for singles. If you are single, share your thoughts and concerns. If you are married, share what you experienced when you were single.

**Connect Out:** When reaching single people for Christ, the message is the same: a clear presentation of the gospel. But do you think having an outreach specifically for singles could be helpful? What might that outreach look like?

<sup>1</sup> Bella DePaulo, "What Has Changed for Single Americans in the Past Decade," September 20, 2016, *The Washington Post*, accessed 8/12/18.

<sup>2</sup> Gina Daifonzo, "Are Single People the Lepers of Today's Church?," <https://www.onfaith.co/onfaith/2014/04/09/are-single-people-the-lepers-of-today/31646>, accessed 8/12/18.