

How does being single fit with God's very good design of marriage?

Part 1: Value both singleness and marriage

(1 Corinthians 7)

God created marriage as something very good. Although man's rebellion against God brought trouble into marriage, in Christ there is hope still for very good marriages. But not all are married and the question naturally arises, "where does being single fit with God's very good design of marriage?"

Both singles and married people need to understand the Biblical perspective on being single. All believers are part of the Body of Christ and need to function as members of that body.

Paul wrote 1 Corinthians to correct problems which had been reported and to answer questions which the church had asked. Chapter 7 begins the section in which Paul is answering their questions. Verses 1–24 suppose some sort of question like, "Is it healthy to go with sex? Shouldn't people get married, so that they can have sex properly?" Verses 25–40 contain the answer to a different but related question. "Is it right or good to give your daughter away in marriage?" Throughout the whole chapter there are references to being single.

We first conclude that we should properly value both being married and being single for two important reasons. (A second conclusion will come in the next sermon.)

I. *Marriage and singleness are both gifts from God.*

1. Paul's statement in 1 Corinthians 7:7 supports this claim. Each has his own gift from God, some for one thing, some for another.
 - a. Both being married and being single must be considered as gifts from God.
 - b. Proverbs 18:22 says this about marriage. Paul says being single is also a gift. God favors some with singleness and favors others with marriage. Both are good things. There are challenges and temptations in both states (cf vv 2, 5, 28, 32–34), but these do not change the fact that God favors His children in different ways at different states of their lives.
2. Paul's statement in verse 17 also supports this claim: God has assigned whatever place we are in.
 - a. Paul is dealing specifically with the situation of one partner being a believer and the other not. What should the Christian do? Stay in whatever situation you are in, when you come to Christ.
 - b. This does not mean that the single person must remain single, just as a slave can become free if he has the chance (verse 21). Our spiritual standing before God is not bettered by changing our circumstances.

God is in control both of being single and being married. Those who belong to God, who have received Christ as their Savior, have a loving, heavenly Father. He gives good things to His children, both being married and being single. Therefore, it is important to value both being married and being single.

Do not despise the gift which God has given another, nor covet it. Do not belittle the other, or think them better. God has put us in our present situations – whether married or single. Value it in your own life and in the lives of others.

II. *Marriage and singleness both have certain advantages.*

1. *Marriage has good reasons.*
 - a. God established marriage as something very good and can be considered the "normal" condition.
 - b. Marriage offers help in resisting sexual temptations (vv 1–9). Sexual relations in marriage are a help and are not optional. It is something honorable in marriage (Hebrews 13:4).

There are good and acceptable reasons to marry and it would be wrong in general to forbid marriage. See 1 Timothy 4:3.
2. *Being single has good reasons.*
 - a. The Corinthians were faced with some sort of difficult circumstances (v 26). Paul meant either the general pressure upon Christians living in a spiritually hostile world or perhaps something unusual was about to happen or was happening to the Corinthians. In this case Paul advises that singleness would be better. We can image the pressure that persecution, financial debt, famine etc. puts on marriage.
 - b. The single person has less concerns and his or her interests are not divided (vv 32–35). A married person has God-given responsibilities within marriage and can be rightly concerned about pleasing their spouse. But this means that there is less time for other things, such as ministry for the Lord.

A married man must love his wife as Christ loves the church, which is right and good, but he then has less time for other ministry. A wife is to be a helper for her husband which is right and good, but she also then has less time and less energy to minister in other ways. Being single frees a person from such concerns.
 - c. A child of God should remain single if there is no possibility to marry a believer. This is the example of the widow (v 39) and Paul's general instruction about union with unbelievers (2 Corinthians 6:14–18). A widow is free to remarry, but only "in the Lord." A believer and an unbeliever do not share in common the most important things. Paul compares it to light and darkness.

These are good reasons to remain single and being single for the right reasons is something good.

Although it was not good for Adam to be alone, it is no longer a perfect world, but contains sin and crises. Marriage remains the "norm" and can be very good, but in the current world singleness has certain advantages. But it is possible both to marry or to remain single for the wrong reasons. In and out of marriage men and women need a change of heart. God offers that change in Jesus Christ. In Christ there is hope for very good marriage and for living victoriously as a single person.