

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

Part 2: Live worthy of your calling

(1 Corinthians 7)

God created marriage as something very good. Yet not everyone gets married. How does being single fit into God's plan? How should believers respond to marriage and singleness? Thinking Biblically requires us to value both marriage and singleness and it requires the believer, whether married or single, to live worthy as a child of God (Ephesians 4:1). In light of the special challenges of being single, there are three important guidelines to consider.

1. *Seek to become the right person, rather than seeking the right person.*

- a. *Becoming the "right person" is becoming the person God wants, which is also becoming the right person as a marriage partner.*

This is true for singles, who desire marriage and are looking for the right partner, as well as for married people, who wish their partner were different. Your own character is more important. Our circumstances are not the main issue, but rather obeying God (1 Corinthians 7:17–24), being a new creation in Christ (Galatians 6:15), and having a heart set apart ("circumcised") for God (Romans 2:28–29).

- b. *Becoming the "right person" requires developing an awareness of living before God.*

The Apostle Paul emphasized to the Corinthians that they were to live "before God" (1 Corinthians 7:24). He was not forbidding a change of circumstance, since he had recommended slaves to get free if they could (v 21) and had had Timothy circumcised (Acts 16:1–3). Instead they were to live with a sense of being in God's presence. They were to please Him. Put your focus on being the right person in God's eyes.

2. *Guard your heart.*

- a. *Guard your heart because it belongs to God.*

The child of God should love the LORD with all the heart, soul, and strength (Deuteronomy 6:5; Matthew 22:37). Proverbs 4:23 says, "Above all else, guard your heart, for it is the wellspring of life." (NIV)

- b. *Guarding your heart includes having the right desires and values.*

Where your treasure is, there your heart will be (Matthew 6:21). You treasure what you strive to gain or keep. It is a constant desire and that which fills your thoughts. Be sure you value the right things.

- c. *Guarding your heart includes having the right thoughts.*

The Bible describes thoughts as being in the heart. King David prayed that the meditation (thoughts) of his heart would be pleasing to God (Psalm 19:14). Not only our actions and words, but also our thoughts should please God. Beware of thinking or acting as if you must have something to be happy or would do anything to get something.

- d. *Guard your heart against grumbling and arguing against God.*

Paul's command, "Do everything without grumbling or arguing" (Philippians 2:14), pertains to Christian unity but especially to submitting to the lordship of Jesus Christ. Grumbling about our circumstances is grumbling against God, a sin for which God killed some of the Israelites (1 Corinthians 10:10). Don't complain about being single or married, or argue with God about what you want and He hasn't given.

- e. *Guard your heart by trusting God in prayer and thanksgiving.*

Choose to believe that God knows best and does good by committing your requests to Him and thanking Him (Philippians 4:6–7). Giving thanks to God expresses your understanding that what He has done and what He will do is good. Set your hearts and minds on things in heaven where Christ is (Colossians 3:1–2). Choose to think on those things with heavenly, eternal values. Desire those things.

3. *Resist temptation.*

- a. *Sexual temptations and selfishness are particularly related to being single or married.*

It is God's will for every believer to avoid sexual immorality (1 Thessalonians 4:3). Marriage can help for those who have that option (1 Corinthians 7:1–9), but it is not a perfect solution. Both the single and the married person needs self-control which is a fruit of the Spirit.

It is also important to resist the temptation to live for self (1 Corinthians 7:3, 23, 32–34). The single is not to live for self, but for the Lord. The married person is not to live selfishly, but have concern for their partner. Living for self will never ultimately satisfy.

The believer should not live for self, because the believer belongs to God, who bought us with the blood of Jesus Christ in order to live for Him (1 Corinthians 7:23; 6:19–20; Romans 6:11).

- b. *In resisting temptation we recognize that no temptation is unique and God is faithful through all temptations (1 Corinthians 10:13).*

We share temptations in common. Even Jesus suffered under temptations as a man. He understands and helps. God is faithful both to limit temptations to what we can bear and to provide what we need to resist without sinning.

If you have accepted Christ as your Savior, you have a high calling as a child of God, whether you are married or single. Walk worthy of that calling. Your character is more important than your circumstances. Desire and think the right things. Love the Lord with all your heart. Draw near to Him and resist evil.