

Victory of the Lamb – October 7, 2018 – Pastor Bill Limmer

1 Corinthians 7:32-40 - Family Matters - The Godliness of Singleness

Harold was 92 and Eleanor was 98 when they met. Neither had been married. But they decided to tie the knot because after all they weren't getting any younger. One day they were slowly walking down the sidewalk discussing their wedding plans as they passed by a big CVS. Harold said let's go inside. And Eleanor followed. Harold went to the back of the store to talk to the pharmacist. Harold said to the pharmacist, 'we are about to get married. And then he asked, do you sell heart medication?' The pharmacist said: "Of course we do. How about medication for circulation? All kinds. Medicine for rheumatism? Yes sir. Medicine for memory problems, arthritis? A large variety. What about vitamins, sleeping pills – you have those? Absolutely. You sell wheel chairs, walkers, and those scooters? Sure do. That settles it then. We would like to register for our wedding gifts here.

Today we are continuing our Family Matters series. In week one we saw that the foundation piece of every family is the person of Jesus Christ. In weeks two and three we looked at marriage and saw that men are to give up their life for their wives and that wives are the strong essential counterpart in the marriage. And last week Steve did a fantastic job reminding parents that teaching their children the love of God is their key goal in family matters. Today we are going to look at singles and the key position that singles have in the church, while potentially correcting some of our view points with what Scripture teachings about the Godliness of Singleness.

Rodney Stark, a social historian, who in his book *The Rise of Christianity* states (on page 104), "Pagan widows faced great social pressure to remarry; Augustus even had widows fined if they failed to marry within two years. In ancient culture, long-term single adults were considered to be living a human life that was less than fully realized. But along came Christianity which advocated for the value and goodness of singleness. Theologian Stanley Hauerwas, states that Christianity was the very first religion to hold up single adulthood as a viable way of life.

In our modern pop culture, it is not family which is idolized so much as romance. Think about Hollywood and even Disney narratives: they begin telling the story of a person seeking true love, and once two people do come together, the story ends! The message is that what matters in life is finding romance. Our culture sends the message that sex is no big deal, while at the same time acting like sex is the most important thing in the world. Which leads us to a key point for singles and for all who are not single. **1 Corinthians 6:18 -7:2 Flee from sexual immorality. All other sins a person commits are outside the body, but whoever sins sexually, sins against their own body.** ¹⁹**Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own;** ²⁰**you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your bodies. Now for the matters you wrote about: "It is good for a man not to have sexual relations with a woman."** ²**But since sexual immorality is occurring, each man should have sexual relations with his own wife, and each woman with her own husband.** So let me say it this way for your good and mine: If you aren't married you should not be having sex. I know it is a struggle to try to honor God with your body in a sex crazed culture where you turn on TV and are bombarded by sexual temptation. Christian singles will sometimes slip up and sin. Others worry they are going to. But you can be forgiven for messing up. And with the help of the Holy Spirit you can repent and practice purity.

Today, according to statistics that I ran across this past week 37% of adults over 18 are single. They have either never married or are single again because of divorce or death. [If your FB status looks like this \(pic\)](#) you are in good company. Paul and Jesus were both single too. Jesus was single. The perfect, and most complete person ever, did the greatest thing ever and was single. Paul says in 1 Corinthians **7 I wish that all of you were as I am. But each of you has your own gift from God; one has this gift, another has that.** ⁸ **Now to the unmarried^[a] and the widows I say: It is good for them to stay unmarried, as I do.** ⁹ **But if they cannot control themselves, they should marry, for it is better to marry than to burn with passion.** Well that is different than what we are used to, isn't it?. Paul sees his singleness as a gift. Your relationship status is a gift. Not a gift to exchange that is not seeing it as gift but a curse. If you get upset every time you get a wedding invitation with a plus one as a problem you need a perspective change. This is a gift given according to God's grace. Here is how you can tell if you have the gift of singleness. I will ask you just one question, and it will tell you right on the money, never failed, if you have the gift of singleness. "Did you wake up this morning single?" If you did, you have the gift. It is that simple. Today you have the gift of singleness. Will it be permanent, I don't know but you need to use your gift today. Everyone here needs to see your present relationship status as a gift.

Singleness is a gift which allows for kingdom priority and for trusting the giver. Gift of singleness use the gift not lose the gift. You are a part of the church that is not only important it is necessary. Singleness is not a white elephant gift. It is a good gift of God. This is a theology and understanding of God's Word that we all need. James 1:17 **Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows.** God only gives good gifts. Singleness teaches us the supremacy and sufficiency of Christ. Jesus is enough. If what you have right now is not good then God is not done or your perspective is off. Trust the giver.

1 Corinthians 7:28-31 **But if you do marry, you have not sinned; and if a virgin marries, she has not sinned. But those who marry will face many troubles in this life, and I want to spare you this.**²⁹ **What I mean, brothers and sisters, is that the time is short. From now on those who have wives should live as if they do not;**³⁰ **those who mourn, as if they did not; those who are happy, as if they were not; those who buy something, as if it were not theirs to keep;**³¹ **those who use the things of the world, as if not engrossed in them. For this world in its present form is passing away.** – What? The key in this passage is that things of this world is passing way. What is so important to you today will it matter in 600 years. Live for another world. You have an eternal family. You know no one is married up there. Mic drop. Matthew 22:30 ³⁰ **At the resurrection people will neither marry nor be given in marriage; they will be like the angels in heaven.** Don't make any relationship a place of worship. Marriage is good but in marriage you will have trouble. Some single people think that all there problems are going to be solved when they get married. Check out what happened in some of our families this morning. We are going to be late – get off the couch and looks what needs to be done. You get here and you are trying to check your kids into Victory Kids running late, meanwhile some singles are walking in worship all chill with their stomach full and a cup of coffee in hand.

1 Cor 7:32-35 **I would like you to be free from concern. An unmarried man is concerned about the Lord's affairs—how he can please the Lord.** ³³ **But a married man is concerned about the affairs of this world—how he can please his wife—** ³⁴ **and his interests are divided. An unmarried woman or virgin is concerned about the Lord's affairs: Her aim is to be devoted to the Lord in both body and spirit. But a married woman is concerned about the affairs of this world—how she can please her husband.** ³⁵ **I am saying this for your own good, not to restrict you, but that you may live in a right way in undivided devotion to the Lord.**

When I went to Zambia, having a blast helping start and nurture campus ministry, teaching evangelism to the pastors of Zambia and Malawi. I had a blast but . . . I was thinking about – how is my family.

Single for a reason – not because you haven't spent enough time doing cross fit, not because you are too clingy, not because you are too flirty, don't have the right job, If you are here and you are single and using your gift for the sake of the kingdom to spread the gospel. I am so thankful for you. If you are single and you are setting in front of the video game or in front of the TV you can do better. Do something that will out last you. Share the gospel. Devotion to God – small group, You belong.

Pastor Ben Struck in a recent podcast related this story. I was a newly married man when a tsunami hit the coast of Thailand, killing almost a quarter million people. He said, "As I watched the tragedy unfold on the news, I called up a good friend and asked, "Did you hear about the tsunami? He said, "Yeah, I am going." And I replied, "I knew it." I knew it because he was a guy who flexibility with work. And he was young and single and there was a place with a massive humanitarian crisis. That is a blessing of singleness.

Carol was and still is single. I met her about 11 years ago. Her nickname is Chapel mom. This single sought out Christ with her life through her volunteer service. While I didn't keep count, I am willing to say that Carol volunteered at least ten hours a week at the campus ministry she was a part of. Her service was invaluable. Her love infectious. Her faith commitment outstanding. Her Savior perfect for her and all she served. She needed a man in her life, a perfect man and that narrowed the field down to 1, her Savior, the God-man Jesus. Her job by day by the way was working with young children in a Headstart program.

If you are married and have single friends, don't go all weird on them. Invite them over. Single people like to eat too. Encourage them, support them, give them opportunities to do ministry with you or opportunities do ministry you can't do but they can. Share life with them. Respect them. You were single and one day you might be again too.

Godliness and singleness. Making a difference in the next generation. God sent you a love letter and more than that God sent you his very best, his only Son. And he didn't wait until you were "worthy: before he sought you out. He sent Jesus to meet you where you are, take on your guilt, absorb your shortcomings, and pay the price for them. Jesus resolved them by his sacrifice. His sacrifice silences any doubt that he loves you.

God came down took on human flesh. And lived a single life. Tempted in every way that you and I are yet was without sin. He had this amazing perspective every single day to be placed in our place for all the days when our perspective is less than stellar less than accurate. He was treated unfairly. People didn't understand. People actually hated him. People were jealous of him. These sins and others, these sins and our sins put Jesus on the cross where he died an excruciating death check it out in our place, the death we deserved he died, the sucky thing we deserve he went through for us. And not begrudgingly but with a smile amidst the pain. Three days later he actually kicked death in the teeth and came out of the grace. And you wanna know why? Because every single life matters.