

NOTES



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Church IN THE MESS

Paul's roadmap for the Church through 1 Corinthians

Week 8 | Singleness & Marriage

PRAYER

Heavenly Father, We thank You for the gift of life and the call to serve You in every season. As we open Your Word, help us see that both singleness and marriage are gifts from You for Your Kingdom purpose. Teach us to honour You with our lives, whatever our circumstances, and to find our greatest joy in serving You faithfully. In Jesus' name, Amen.

OPENING QUESTION (OPTIONAL)

What movie title best describes your love life? (You can use an existing title or make up your own. Eg "Pulp Fiction, CastAway, True Lies 😂)

WORD

17 Only let each person lead the life that the Lord has assigned to him, and to which God has called him. This is my rule in all the churches. 18 Was anyone at the time of his call already circumcised? Let him not seek to remove the marks of circumcision. Was anyone at the time of his call uncircumcised? Let him not seek circumcision. 19 For neither circumcision counts for anything nor uncircumcision, but keeping the commandments of God. 20 Each one should remain in the condition in which he was called. 21 Were you a bondservant when called? Do not be concerned about it. (But if you can gain your freedom, avail yourself of the opportunity.) 22 For he who was called in the Lord as a bondservant is a freedman of the Lord. Likewise he who was free when called is a bondservant of Christ. 23 You were bought with a price; do not become bondservants of men. 24 So, brothers, in whatever condition each was called, there let him remain with God. 25 Now concerning the betrothed, I have no command from the Lord, but I give my judgment as one who by the Lord's mercy is trustworthy. 26 I think that in view of the present distress it is good for a person to remain as he is. 27 Are you bound to a wife? Do not seek to be free. Are you free from a wife? Do not seek a wife. 28 But if you do marry, you have not sinned, and if a betrothed woman marries, she has not sinned. Yet those who marry will have worldly troubles, and I would spare you that. 29 This is what I mean, brothers: the appointed time has grown very short. From now on, let those who have wives live as though they had none, 30 and those who mourn as though they were not mourning, and those who rejoice as though they were not rejoicing, and those who buy as though they had no goods, 31 and those who deal with the world as though they had no dealings with it. For the present form of this world is passing away. 32 I want you to be free from anxieties. The unmarried man is anxious about the things of the Lord, how to please the Lord. 33 But the married man is anxious about worldly things, how to please his wife, 34 and his interests are divided. And the unmarried or betrothed woman is anxious about the things of the Lord, how to be holy in body and spirit. But the married woman is anxious about worldly things, how to please her husband. 35 I say this for your own benefit, not to lay any restraint upon you, but to promote good order and to secure your undivided devotion to the Lord.

- 1 Corinthians 7:17-35 ESV

Secondary Passages:

- Genesis 2:18-25
- Matthew 19:3-12

Commentary & Insights:

The gift of Singleness

- Jesus affirmed singleness as a valid and honorable calling for those devoted to the Kingdom (Matt 19:12)

Context: The disciples had just said, "If such is the case of a man with his wife, it is better not to marry" (Matt 19:10)

- Jesus responds by introducing three categories of "eunuchs": those born that way, those made that way by others, and "those who have made themselves eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of heaven"

- This third category is voluntary celibacy for Kingdom purposes—a radical concept in first-century Judaism where marriage and procreation were considered religious obligations

- Jesus concludes "Let the one who is able to receive this receive it"—indicating this is a special calling, not for everyone, but valid and honourable

- Paul celebrates singleness as a season or calling that allows for undivided devotion to God's work (1 Corinthians 7:32–35)

- Paul writes, "The unmarried man is anxious about the things of the Lord, how to please the Lord. But the married man is anxious about worldly things, how to please his wife, and his interests are divided" (vv. 32-34)

- Singleness is not a waiting room for marriage—it's a platform for Kingdom impact.

- Undivided Devotion can practically look like you being available, mobile, flexible, relational (investing deeply in discipleship and mentoring), and resourceful (access to resources).

Question: How is God calling you to leverage your freedom and flexibility for His mission RIGHT NOW?

The gift of Marriage

- Marriage is designed for companionship, mutual help, and faithfulness (Gen 2:18–25)

- God declares: "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him" (Gen 2:18)

- The "one flesh" union (v. 24) speaks to physical, emotional, and spiritual intimacy—a comprehensive partnership

- Marriage in Genesis precedes the fall, making it part of God's good creation design, not just a remedy for sin

- Paul teaches that marriage is not about personal fulfillment but mutual service—meeting each other's needs and pursuing God's mission together (1 Cor 7:3–5)

- "The wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does. Likewise, the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does" (v. 4)—radical equality in marriage
 - Marriage is a means to serve God, not an end for our happiness. In 1 Cor 7:29-31, Paul writes with eschatological (end times) urgency: "The appointed time has grown very short... the present form of this world is passing away"
 - Even those who marry should live "as though they had none" (v. 29)—marriage is not ultimate; Kingdom priorities are.
 - Marriage points beyond itself to Christ and the Church (Eph 5:32)—it's a living parable of the gospel.
 - Practical mission together can look like a Unified purpose (praying where God may be leading you both), Hospitality (your home may become a hub for kingdom work), Witness (Your covenant love displays Christ's love for the church to a watching world, Ephesians 5:25)
- Question: View your marriage as a ministry platform. Ask together: "Lord, how can we use our partnership to advance Your Kingdom this season?"

The Foundation for Everyone

- Contentment and Calling (1 Cor 7:17–24)
- Paul calls believers to live out their calling wherever God has placed them. "Only let each person lead the life that the Lord has assigned to him, and to which God has called him" (v. 17)
- The key phrase "remain with God" (v. 24) shows that staying in your current state doesn't mean staying stagnant—it means staying connected to God's presence and purposes there
- Whether single or married, contentment comes from knowing we belong to Christ and serve His purposes.
- "You were bought with a price; do not become slaves of men" (v. 23), the "price" is Christ's blood—our identity is rooted in redemption, not circumstances
- Paul's logic: If Christ purchased you, your relationship status doesn't define your worth or calling. True freedom comes from belonging to Christ, not from achieving a particular marital status

Core Truths for ALL Believers:

Your primary identity: You are a beloved child of God, purchased by Christ, filled with the Spirit

Your ultimate calling: To make disciples of all nations (Matthew 28:19-20)

Your current stewardship: Use whatever state you're in—single or married—as a gift entrusted for Kingdom service

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What helps you find contentment in your current life stage?
2. In what ways do Genesis 2:18–25 and Matthew 19:3–12 help us understand God's design for both marriage and singleness?
3. What might it look like to view your relationship status—married or single—as an assignment rather than a stage?
4. How can the church better support both singles and married couples in living for God's Kingdom?
5. What might change in your life if you fully believed your current season is a gift from God?

Application:

This week, reflect on how you can use your current season — married or single — for God's Kingdom.

Ask yourself:

- How can I serve others from where I am right now?
- What might God be teaching me about devotion, patience, or purpose in this season?

Closing Prayer

Father, thank You for calling us to live for You in every season. Whether single or married, help us to see our lives as gifts meant for Your service, not just our fulfillment. Teach us to find joy in obedience, to honour You in our relationships, and to use every opportunity to make Your love known. May our lives — in every stage — point others to Jesus. Amen.