

Marrieds and Singles Together in the Church Family

1 Corinthians 7:25-31

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God desires for the marrieds and singles to do life together in the church family. This involves a common vision of both marriage and singleness. Both marriage and singleness are highly valued by God.

How do we arrive at a common vision of Singleness?

1) Recognise the change in God's covenant

Paul urged the betrothed (virgin in Greek) in Corinth to remain as they were amidst the distress they were facing (v. 25). He called the singles to remain single and not seek a wife (vv. 27-28). In the Torah, marriage was necessary to fulfil the law to be fruitful and multiply. Every Jew following God knew they needed to get married and have children; none of them would voluntarily choose to remain single. Under the old covenant, marriage, children and material prosperity in the land were markers of God's covenantal blessings; they showed obedience to Him. Marriage and offspring were also necessary for a Jew under the old covenant to retain their inheritance in the promised land and preserve their name after death.

However, we are not under the old covenant anymore. The coming of Jesus Christ has profoundly changed our covenant with God; we are now under the new covenant! This significantly changes the meaning of being blessed and elevates singleness to be seen as a gift from God. While marriage and children are wonderful blessings from God, those who are single and childless are no less blessed. The good news of Jesus Christ changes the meaning and experience of singleness.

2) Reject the cultural narrative in our world today

Paul wrote the epistle during the Greco-Roman world. Their culture viewed marriage as a form of legitimate childbearing, and gratifying sexual pleasure was sought outside of marriage.

Sex and marriage were often regarded separately. The globalized world we live in today propagates the same message: sex does not need to be found in marriage. Attributing to singleness what it's not meant to carry will lead one to feel hurt not because of one's singleness, but what one thinks about singleness. We need to reject the culture's narrative on sex and trust in God's word that we are His redeemed children in whom He is well pleased.

Young singles were also singled out due to their lack of contribution to the declining birth rates, and laws were made to disfavour them. It is in this historical backdrop that Paul explains that the experience of singleness is meant to be a life of simplicity and service (v. 28). He would rather a believer be free from the obligations and distractions of marriage and be free to be of service unto God. Reject the cultural narrative of being single and choose to let singleness reflect the freedom of service unto God!

3) Embrace the church family

The value of singleness cannot be seen just in the change of one's perspective; it must be found communally. God's plan for singles is to thrive in intimacy with the church family. Paul calls for believers to let the eternal world that is to come shape the way we live (vv. 28-31). The only way to value singleness rightly is through the lens of eternity. Paul urges marrieds to live in a way that values singleness, and vice versa. Marriage and singleness are two sides of the same coin that reflects something valuable that will only be fully revealed when the present form of this world passes away. Ultimately, the supreme value of singleness and marriage can only be appreciated in the light of the gospel and the church family that births from it.