

The Gift & Freedom of Singleness

I. A Really Quick Overview of 1 Corinthians 7

- **7:1-7**—Responding to asceticism: Get married and fulfill your marital duty.
- **7:8-9**—To the unmarried and widows: Stay single like Paul, but if you burn, get married.
- **7:10-11**—To the married: Don't divorce; if you do, either be reconciled or stay unmarried.
- **7:12-16**—To the married with unbelieving spouse: Stay married if they are willing but if they leave, let them go.
- **7:12-24**—To each one in the church: Don't feel that your earthly status needs to change when God calls you to be a Christian.
- **7:25-38**—To the betrothed (virgins – NIV): Remain as you are. The time is short (v. 29).
- **7:39-40**—To the widows: You are free to remarry if your husband dies but should only marry a Christian.

II. The Gift of Singleness (1 Cor 7:7)

1. Singleness is for some, not others.
2. Singleness is not some mystical or magical ability to resist sexual temptation and reject marriage.
3. The gift of singleness is a recognition that God has given the gift of celibacy for a season (or for a few, maybe a lifetime).
 - a. Not a status, i.e., single or married.
 - b. The gift = spiritually motivated for singleness, live a self-controlled life, and contentment with what God has given.

4. If you have the gift, you'll be content like Paul (Phil 4:11-13).
5. Some singles can choose to remain single for a season (or even a lifetime).
6. Some singles should get married.
 - a. Just because you "burn" (v. 9) doesn't mean you are *guaranteed* marriage.
 - b. If you struggle with sexual immorality then you are burning. Don't wait to "fix" the problem.
 - c. Contentment in singleness and an openness to marriage are not mutually exclusive.

III. The Freedom of Singleness (1 Cor 7:32-35)

1. Freedom *from* the troubles of marriage (v. 28)
2. Freedom *from* pleasing your spouse (vs. 33-34)
3. Freedom *from* having divided interests (vs. 35)
4. Freedom *to* be single (vs. 32-35; Matt 19:10-12)
5. Freedom *to* dedicate your life with singular purpose to God (vs. 32, 34, 35)

The Nature of Our Christian Relationships: Family-like Relations

"Do not sharply rebuke an older man, but rather appeal to him as a father, and to the younger men as brothers, to the older women as mothers, and to the younger women as sisters, in all purity." (1 Timothy 5:1-2).

- With care, concern, service and self-sacrifice.
 - With interest and knowledge.
 - With encouragement to grow spiritually.
 - With love.
 - With purity.
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Outline: CFBC Family and Marriage Class

- Week 1 (12/12): *The Spirit-Filled Marriage*
- Week 2 (12/19): *God's Purpose for the Family*
- Week 3 (12/26): *The Ministry of the Family*
- Week 4 (1/2): *The Gift & Freedom of Singleness***
- Week 5 (1/9): *Singleness: Identity & Contentment*

Additional Reading:

God, Marriage, and Family by Andreas Köstenberger
Recovering Biblical Manhood & Womanhood ed. by Grudem & Piper

Singleness in the Old And New Testaments (Köstenberger, 174)

	OLD TESTAMENT	NEW TESTAMENT
VIEW ON SINGLENES	In light of Gen. 2:24, marriage is treated as the norm; singleness is generally viewed as undesirable	Marriage is still considered the norm, but in view of Kingdom concerns singleness is presented as an advantageous state for those who are called to it
CATEGORIES OF SINGLENES	Widow (Deu 10:18, 25:5-6, Isa 54:4, Ruth)	A gift given by God; not required of all (1 Cor. 7:7) A calling extended by God and accepted by those so called (Matt. 19:11-12)
	Eunuch (Lev 21:20, Deu 23:1, 2 Kgs 9:32, 25:19, Est 1:12, 2:3, 4:5, Isa 56:3-5, Dan 1:17)	
	Those who could not marry for reasons of disease or economic difficulty (e.g., leprosy)	
	Divine call (Jer 16:1-4)	
	Divorced men and women (Deu 24:1-4, Jdg 19:1-2)	
	Young men and women prior to marriage (Gen 24, Deu 22:13-21, Jdg 14)	

A Biblical Theology of Singleness: From Creation to the Final State (Köstenberger, 198)

	CREATION	OLD TESTAMENT	NEW TESTAMENT	FINAL STATE

SINGLENESS	Nonexistent	Uncommon and generally undesirable	Advantageous for kingdom ministry	Universal
MARRIAGE	The norm	The norm	The norm	No marriage but "like the angels"

The Single Friendship Continuum

Promiscuous

Biblical Friendship

Paranoid

Leading them on
"Interested"
Flirting

1 Tim 5:1
Family-like relations
Brothers & Sisters in Christ

Fear of rejection
Protecting hearts
Not Interested