Grace Baptist Church/Crossroads International Church/ CIC Dr. Rick Griffith

15 November 1998/ 6 April 2008/ 13 Jan 2013 Message 10 of 24

NIV 40 Minutes

**Why Stay Single?**

Title

***1 Corinthians 7:25-40***

**Topic:** Singleness

**Subject:** Singleness has its advantages (especially during difficult times)

**Complement:** but marriage isn’t prohibited.

**Purpose:** The listeners will accept their singleness (for singles) or not force singles they know to get married (for those married).

# Introduction

Crisis

### Good advice I try to follow and also often give people in a crisis is “Don’t make major changes during a crisis.” It’s best not to make big life decisions in perilous times.

2013

1943

#### Imagine that the year was not 2013 but 1943––70 years ago. You are living right in the midst of the Japanese occupation of Singapore.

Soldiers

#### Alas, but even that cannot stop love! That special person comes into your life—do you get married?

Heart

#### Perhaps so—it wouldn’t be illegal—but maybe it would be best not to marry during this kind of distress.

### During about AD 57 the Christians in Corinth endured a difficult time.

Map

#### We don’t know the details, but Paul does refer to “the present crisis” in 1 Corinthians 7:26.

1 Cor 7

#### In the chapter overall, he addresses both marriage and singleness––and encourages no major life-changes (“remain in your state”). So in verses 1-24 Paul has already addressed married folks (1-7), widows (8-9), divorcees (10-11), and those thinking about divorce (12-16). He told all to be content in their present marital state—also physically and with their job (17-24).

Groups

#### Last week I summed up what Paul said in verses 1-24 this way: *Marriage, a new physical appearance or work status won’t make you happy—but being content with the state God placed you will!*

MI of 1-24

#### Now beginning in verse 25 he gives advice to singles applicable to difficult times.

### Paul’s preference was for singles not to marry (25-28a).

Black

#### Christ said nothing about never-married females at Corinth so Paul would state his own opinion (25).

#### His opinion was that the Corinthian crisis made it best for people to stay in their present marital state (26-27).

##### Marital decisions should be put on hold (26).

##### Those married shouldn’t seek a divorce (27a).

##### Singles shouldn’t seek a spouse (27b).

#### Even still, marriage is not prohibited (28a).

### Subject: Although Paul’s admonition doesn’t apply to all times and we may not find ourselves in the same type of crisis, Paul does bring up this very important question: Why stay single—especially in difficult times? This issue is in your bulletin outline.

Why?

### Now I know that most of you are married—don’t tune me out, OK? You might be thinking, “OK, great, I can catch up on my sleep on this sermon!”

Black

#### No, while Paul talks mostly about singles, he also reveals what God says about marriage too. In fact, some of the verses relate directly to you.

#### Also, you have permission to tune me out only if you don’t know any single people, OK? What we married folks learn here can be very helpful in knowing how to relate to singles—whether they are our own children or someone else’s.

### So why stay single? Paul answers this question in verses 28b-35 where he notes that…

# I. Singleness has its advantages (28b-35).

#  [There are some real benefits to never marrying. The first relates to…]

MPI

## Trials: Singles have fewer troubles than married folks (28b).

Trials

### We have no control over many of life’s stresses—you don’t choose when to have family members die—and you don’t put on your calendar, “Let’s see, I’ll get fired in June!” Many of life’s trials just come at us without asking our permission!

Stress

### But in some ways we *can* control our amount of stress from new situations—and marriage is one of those troubles Paul mentions! Let’s see if you are under stress right now. Do you see these two dolphins? If you don’t see two identical dolphins, then you are not a stress-free individual.

Cow

#### In 1967 two psychiatrists developed a more accurate stress scale. It assigns a value for each adjustment in life—the higher the number, the more stress.

Scale

#### What I find interesting is that their *three most stressful areas* all relate to marriage!

##### Topping the scale is the death of a spouse with a stress value of 100.

• 100

##### Divorce is assigned 73.

• 73

##### And marital separation is 65. That’s the top three.

• 65

#### This is followed by death of close family member, jail term, then personal injury or illness. If you exceed 200 stress points in a year, psychiatric disorders increase!

• Others

#### Well, among the top 9 stress areas, over half of them relate to marriage! If you don’t get married, then you will eliminate nearly half of your stress! Even *getting* married has a stress value of 50! This is something no stress ball can solve.

Stress Ball

• Marriage

(Are these marriage troubles true of all time or limited to Paul’s day? True always, though more so in times of great distress. So singles have the advantage of *fewer trials* than those married. What other advantages to singleness does Paul note?)

Black

## Time: Singles have more time to invest in eternal matters (29-31).

Time

### What does this text say?

Black

#### Actually, time for God’s work is short for all as Christ can come at any time (29a).

#### So believers shouldn’t be preoccupied with worldly things (29b-31a).

##### Married men shouldn’t become so preoccupied with their wives that they can’t effectively serve Christ (29b). Even us marrieds must still serve Christ.

##### Those mourning shouldn’t let it interfere with serving Christ (30a).

##### Those rejoicing shouldn’t let it interfere with serving Christ (30b).

##### Those shopping shouldn’t let it interfere with serving Christ (30c-31a). I bet you never knew that shopping was mentioned in Scripture! But notice what he says—whatever you buy, buy it as if you won’t be able to keep it!

#### Why not be preoccupied with worldly things? Because they don’t last (31b)!

### How does this text apply?

#### You’ll notice in verses 29-31 that this section begins and ends with the mention of time—this is the one commodity that we all have equally—everyone has 24 hours.

#### But there’s no doubt that singles can accomplish more in those 24 hours.

SBC Women

##### In 2008 I counted my 7 female colleagues at SBC. Guess what? Four were single, two married without kids and only one married with children!

##### Of course, having so much time can work against you too. I learned on Friday that the top city in the USA in porn viewings is also the city with the highest percentage of singles! Can you guess which city? Washington DC—the capital! The average number of porn videos watched annually in a typical US city is 7, but in DC it is 14. Most US cities have 50% of residents married, but DC is only 25% married. Singles can misuse time too.

DC & Porn

##### [Show names on slide.] Do you recognize these authors? Time magazine reports an interesting phenomenon—that many famous authors of children’s books didn’t have children—from Dr Seuss, Beatrix Potter, Lewis Carroll and others (Tan 5737)!

Authors

##### At times I’ve wondered how some authors can write so much—at least in the case of John Stott and J. D. Douglas, being single helps. Until his death, Dr. Douglas called himself an “unclaimed treasure” but I wonder if he could have authored and edited so much if he was ever claimed!

Others

##### Other confirmed bachelors included Beethoven, Michelangelo, Voltaire, and Hans Christian Anderson. Each of these men had enormous amounts of time compared to their married counterparts. Tan 5739

##### Years ago I was talking to one of my single students about this issue once. He was very surprised when I told him that when I was a bachelor I used to have Ephesians, Colossians, and Philippians memorized. He asked me, “Don’t you still have time—at least, let’s say, 15 hours weekly to read the Bible?” “I wish I did!” I replied, “But by the time I get my teaching and marking done, and time to help my boys with their homework and reading and cleaning the dishes to give my wife a break, there’s not 15 hours left!”

Black

(So Paul notes the advantage of less trials and more time… Anything else? Yes—less…)

## Distractions: Singles can serve God in ways that those married can’t (32-35).

Distractions

### Is Paul saying that married people can’t serve Christ? No—he’s just saying that it is harder to be devoted to Christ when married.

Black

### Has marriage hurt my usefulness for Christ?

Cross-roads

#### In my own case, I was first a single missionary. Susan and I met on the Campus Crusade music team Crossroads, which reached over 600 people per concert. We saw over 10,000 people come to Christ in our 269 concerts throughout Asia.

Map

#### But that required traveling together over 50% of the time—which we could never have done with a family! So I became a Bible college professor instead—with only infrequent trips.

Couple

China

#### Am I less useful to God now? I can now relate to both singles and married friends, but as for the sheer *quantity* of time available for ministry, I have far less now.

Black

(So Paul has clearly articulated some of the advantages of singleness—less trials, more time, less distractions. Does that mean none of us should get married? No, verses 36-40 say that…)

# II. Marriage still isn’t prohibited (36-40).

MPII

#  [You don’t sin by getting married. In verses 36-38 he says that…]

Singles

## Singles should get married if sexual temptation is too strong (36-38).

### Does this text refer to a father (NASB) or male fiancé (NIV)? While most early commentators felt it means the father (see the NIV text note) and this is a possible translation, verses 36-37 don’t seem to fit a father arranging a marriage for his daughter. How would a father be “acting improperly” towards his daughter?

Black

### So what Paul is saying is that a man tempted towards sexual sin with his fiancée should marry her (36).

### But a man convinced he shouldn’t marry his fiancée shouldn’t marry her (37). In other words, engagement is not binding like marriage! An engagement can be broken.

### It’s better not to marry in perilous times but it’s not prohibited (38).

(Not only can singles marry…)

## Widows can remarry too (39-40).

Widows

### A woman’s marriage bond is broken by her husband’s death (39).

#### But implication this would apply to a widower as well.

Black

#### Does this mean that *only* death breaks the marriage bond? Paul doesn’t say this explicitly—but this could be why marrying a divorcee is called adultery in Mark 10:11-12 and why Paul required divorcées to remain unmarried in verse 11 (though divorce seems allowable elsewhere––Matt. 19:9; 1 Cor. 7:15). The point is that…

### Yet Paul says widows are generally happier if they don’t remarry (40)—and most widows don’t remarry.

#### Why did Paul say widows who don’t remarry are happier than widows who do?

#### Because they have the same advantages of singleness that he mentioned earlier.

#### But, of course, widows with children are another story. James Dobson calls single-parenting “the toughest job in the universe.” If God brings another believer into the life of a widow or widower, remarriage certainly isn’t wrong.

Single parenting

Black

(But let’s not miss the forest through the trees. The big idea of this text for today actually continues this same theme of contentment from last week, and that is this idea…)

# Conclusion

### Singleness has its advantages (especially during difficult times) but marriage isn’t prohibited (M.I.). You can marry in the Lord but remaining unmarried has its benefits. To misquote American Express, “Non-membership has its privileges.”

### How does this teaching on the benefits of singleness relate to **singles**?

Non-mem

M.I.

What ab Singles?

#### Remember there are many blessings to remaining single—so trust God to provide a mate for you only if and when it is His timing. Follow the advice of verse 27: “Do not look for a wife.” God doesn’t need your help!

##### One unmarried woman who died at age 87 was named Harriet Hartbyrne (really!). She wrote in her will, “I don’t want anyone to put ‘Miss’ on my tombstone—I haven’t missed as much as people think!” Tan 5744

Miss

##### Edith Hammond was the oldest friend that Susan and I ever had—also one of the most positive. Born in 1895, she never married—maybe that’s how she lived to 107 years old! She lived a wonderful, full life of service to others.

Black

##### There is much to gain from remaining single! You might even live longer! But more importantly, for you singles…

#### Serve God wholeheartedly in your single state.

##### Don’t just think that because you are single, therefore you are as verse 34 says, “devoted to the Lord in body and spirit.”

##### Singles can live just as selfishly as couples—perhaps even more!

##### Follow the models of singles among us like Jonathan Stone—in their singleness they serve God and us wholeheartedly. I looked at Jonathan’s facebook page today and saw he has 2,444 friends!

Jonathan Stone

### But how does this teaching on “Why Stay Single?” relate to us married folks?

For Marrieds

#### Don’t pressure singles into marriage. Don’t bang your head wondering when and if they will ever get married!

Bang Head

##### Many of them like it that way and they find support from the Apostle Paul! In fact, the two key figures of the NT—Jesus and Paul—were both single!

##### One well-known single is Chuck Swindoll’s sister, Luci Swindoll.

Luci Swindoll

###### She authored the book, *Wide My World, Narrow My Bed!*

Jesus & Paul

###### She says, “As a little girl, I always liked the idea of a single lifestyle. In never consciously wanted to marry. I had high goals. I wanted to sing professionally. I wanted to travel. I realized that if I married, I wouldn’t have time to accomplish these goals. Also, I thought my temperament needed solitude and was not suited to the responsibilities that marriage and a family required. I didn’t think I could blend into my husband with my whole heart. Quite early, God revealed to me that I would be better off not to marry” (SINGLENESS benefits of).

#### So you 50 and 60-something folks, don’t be nagging your children (or others), “When are you going to get married?!”

Don’t nag

##### Some aren’t called to it! (Remind me I said this later since none of my three sons are married yet, and my oldest son just turned 26 on Friday, OK?)

##### Since most churches in Singapore have 2 or 3 unmarried Christian women for every unmarried Christian man, we need to come to terms with this here.

Content-ment

Black

### Ah, we’re back to where we started last week—contentment. Ultimately, contentment is not found in any relationship other than that primary relationship with Jesus Christ.

Grace Baptist Church Dr. Rick Griffith

15 November 1998 Message #10

NIV 35 Minutes

**Why Stay Single?**

***1 Corinthians 7:25-40***

**Topic:** Singleness

**Subject:** Singleness has its advantages (especially during difficult times)

**Complement:** but marriage isn’t prohibited.

**Purpose:** The listeners will accept their singleness (for singles) or not force singles they know to get married (for marrieds).

# Introduction

### Today is the International Day of Prayer for the Persecuted Church. It is our annual day to pray for believers like these in this month’s “Voice of the Martyrs” newsletter.

#### Hmong believers have been tortured [read back page article]. Hmong villagers are being persecuted severely. When a young believer told officials he would rather die than deny Jesus, they beat him to death on the spot.

#### One of the tragedies in times of persecution relates to marriage. In Pakistan in June last year [story of Salima]…

### One thing I’ve learned from these accounts—and from some of the lesser trials I’ve had in my own life—is that it’s best not to make major life-changes during perilous times.

#### Imagine that the year was not 1998 but 1942.

##### You are living right in the midst of the Japanese occupation of Singapore. Alas, but even that cannot stop love! That special person comes into your life—do you get married?

##### Perhaps so—it wouldn’t be illegal—but maybe it would be best not to marry during this kind of distress.

#### Possibly the same could be said of our present crisis—though it is not as severe as what Singapore experienced during the Japanese occupation. It may be better wisdom to postpone some major decisions right now, depending on how much the economic crisis has altered your life.

### During about AD 57 the Christians in Corinth endured a difficult time.

#### We don’t know the details, but Paul does refer to “the present crisis” in 1 Corinthians 7:26.

#### In this chapter Paul has already addressed marrieds (1-7), widows (8-9), divorcees (10-11), and those contemplating divorce (12-16). He told them all to be content in their present state—maritally, physically, and socio-economically (17-24).

#### Now beginning in verse 25 he gives advice to singles applicable to difficult times.

### Paul’s preference was for singles not to marry (25-28a).

#### Christ said nothing about never-married females at Corinth so Paul would state his own opinion (25).

#### His opinion was that the Corinthian crisis made it best for people to stay in their present marital state (26-27).

##### Marital decisions should be put on hold (26).

##### Marrieds shouldn’t seek a divorce (27a).

##### Singles shouldn’t seek a spouse (27b).

#### Even still, marriage is not prohibited (28a).

### Subject: Although Paul’s admonition doesn’t apply to all times and we may not find ourselves in the same type of crisis, Paul does bring up this very important question: Why stay single—especially in difficult times?

### Now I know that most of you are married—don’t tune me out, OK? You might be thinking, “OK, great, I can catch up on my sleep on this sermon!”

#### No, while Paul talks mostly about God’s will concerning singles, he also reveals what God says about marriage too. In fact, some of the verses relate directly to you.

#### You have permission to tune me out only if you don’t know any single people, OK? What we marrieds learn here can be very helpful in knowing how to counsel them—whether they are own children or someone else’s.

### So why stay single? Paul answers this question in verses 28b-35 where he notes that…

# I. Singleness has its advantages (28b-35).

#  [There are some real benefits to never marrying. The first relates to…]

## Trials: Singles don’t have some troubles that marrieds do (28b).

### How do marrieds face more troubles than singles?

#### We have no control over most of life’s stresses—you typically don’t choose when to have family members die—and you don’t put when you choose to be retrenched on your calendar. Many of life’s trials just come at us without asking our permission!

#### But in some ways we *can* control our amount of stress from new situations—and marriage is one of those troubles Paul mentions!

##### In 1967 some psychologists developed a stress scale. It assigns a value for each adjustment in life—the higher the number, the more stress

##### What I find interesting is that the three most stressful things they note all relate to marriage!

###### Topping the scale is the death of a spouse, which has a stress value of 100.

###### Divorce is assigned 73.

###### And marital separation is 65.

##### This is followed by jail term, death of close family member, then personal injury or loss. They note that if you exceed 200 stress points in a year, there is a significant increase in psychiatric disorders.

##### Well, among the top 13 stress areas, over half of them relate to marriage! If you don’t get married, then you will eliminate nearly half of your stress!

###### Even *getting* married has a stress value of 50!

###### And starting a family for me was definitely the biggest change in my life—my calendar changed from BC to AD—“BC” is “Before Children” and “AD” is “All Downhill”! Just kiddin’—our children are also our greatest joy!

### Now are these troubles of marriage true of all time or limited to Paul’s day? It’s true always, though more so during times of great distress.

(So Paul is clear that singles have advantages as they relate to *trials*—marrieds have unique difficulties as compared with singles. What other advantages to singleness does Paul note?)

## Time: Singles have more time to invest in eternal matters (29-31).

### What does this text say?

#### Actually, for all of us time to do God’s work is short since Christ can come at any moment (29a).

#### So believers shouldn’t be preoccupied with worldly things (29b-31a).

##### Marrieds shouldn’t become so preoccupied with their families that they can’t effectively serve Christ (29b).

##### Those mourning shouldn’t let it interfere with serving Christ (30a).

##### Those rejoicing shouldn’t let it interfere with serving Christ (30b).

##### Those shopping shouldn’t let it interfere with serving Christ (31a). I bet you never knew that shopping was mentioned in Scripture! But notice what he says—whatever you buy, buy it as if you won’t be able to keep it!

#### Why not be preoccupied with worldly things? Because they don’t last (31b)!

### How does this text apply?

#### You’ll notice in verses 29-31 that this section begins and ends with the mention of time—this is the one commodity that we all have equally—everyone has 24 hours.

#### But there’s no doubt that singles can accomplish more in those 24 hours.

##### [Show names on slide.] Do you recognize these authors? Time magazine reports an interesting phenomenon—that many famous authors of children’s books didn’t have children—from Dr Seuss, Beatrix Potter, Lewis Carroll and others (Tan 5737)!

##### At times I’ve wondered how some authors can write so much—at least in the case of John Stott and J. D. Douglas, being single helps. Dr. Douglas still calls himself an “unclaimed treasure” but I wonder if he could have authored and edited so much if he was ever claimed!

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##### I was talking to one of my single students about this issue last Friday. He was very surprised when I told him that when I was a bachelor I used to have Ephesians, Colossians, and Philippians memorized. He asked me, “Don’t you still have time—at least, let’s say, 15 hours weekly to read the Bible?” “I wish I did!” I replied, “But by the time I get my teaching and marking done, and time to help my boys with their homework and reading and cleaning the dishes to give my wife a break, there’s not 15 hours left!”

(So Paul notes the advantage of less trials and more time… Anything else? Yes—less…)

## Distractions: Singles can serve God in ways that marrieds can’t (32-35).

### Is Paul saying that married people can’t serve Christ? No—he’s just saying that it is harder to be devoted to Christ when married.

### To remind myself of my singleness (since this was 15 years ago) I dug out one of my old journals. I wrote this on March 21, 1980—two months before graduating from business school. My parents wanted me to be a businessman but I wanted to be a missionary, so to honour them I went for two job interviews—with Xerox and Del Monte—[“What do you desire most in a job?”].

### What would I say if I went for the same interviews now?

#### I hope I’d say the same, but life has become much more complex with my wife and three sons.

#### For one, I have the distraction of needing enough money in a job to support my family—the $585 monthly I made with Campus Crusade wouldn’t do now!

### The right question is really not “What do I desire most in a job?” The right question is, “What does *God* desire most for me in a job? Could I be as useful to God married as I am single? or would it hurt my usefulness for Christ?”

#### In my own case, I did become a missionary and Susan and I met on the Campus Crusade music team Crossroads, which reached over 600 people per concert. We saw over 10,000 people come to Christ in our 269 concerts throughout Asia.

#### But that required traveling together over 50% of the time—which we could never do now with a family! So I became a Bible college lecturer instead—with only infrequent trips.

#### Am I more or less useful to God now? Although I can relate to both singles and married friends, as for the sheer *quantity* of time available for ministry, I have far less now.

(Yet Paul has clearly articulated some of the advantages of singleness—less trials, more time, less distractions. Does that mean none of us should get married? No, verses 36-40 say that…)

# II. Marriage still isn’t prohibited (36-40).

#  [You don’t sin by getting married. In verses 36-38 he says that…]

## Singles should get married if sexual temptation is too strong (36-38).

### Does this text refer to a father (NASB) or male fiancé (NIV)? While most early commentators felt it means the father (see the NIV text note) and this is a possible translation, verses 36-37 don’t seem to fit a father arranging a marriage for his daughter. How would a father be “acting improperly” towards his daughter?

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### But a man convinced he shouldn’t marry his fiancée shouldn’t marry her (37). In other words, engagement is not binding like marriage! An engagement can be broken.

### It’s better not to marry in perilous times but it’s not prohibited (38).

(Not only can singles marry…)

## Widows can remarry too (39-40).

### A woman’s marriage bond is broken by her husband’s death (39a).

#### But implication this would apply to a widower as well.

#### Does this mean that *only* death breaks the marriage bond? Paul doesn’t say this explicitly—but this could be why marrying a divorcee is called adultery in Mark 10:11-12 and why Paul required divorcées to remain unmarried in verse 11. The point is that…

### Remarriage to a believer is allowed only after the death of a former spouse (39b).

#### An issue not addressed is if the former spouse has remarried first—can a divorced woman remarry if her husband has remarried so no reconciliation is possible?

#### This is a tough question with many different views. But it seems to me that this verse allows remarriage only after the death of a former spouse.

#### In any case, if one does remarry, the tense used in Mark indicates that an *act* of adultery takes place—not that a person *continually* lives in a *state* of adultery with a second spouse.

### Yet Paul says widows are generally happier if they don’t remarry (40)—and most widows don’t remarry.

#### Why did Paul say widows who don’t remarry are happier than widows who do?

#### Because they have the same advantages of singleness that he mentioned earlier.

#### But, of course, widows with children are another story. James Dobson calls single-parenting “the toughest job in the universe.” If God brings another believer into the life of a widow or widower, remarriage certainly isn’t wrong.

(But let’s not miss the forest through the trees. The big idea of this text for today actually continues this same theme of contentment from last week, and that is this idea…)

# Conclusion

### Singleness has its advantages (especially during difficult times) but marriage isn’t prohibited (M.I.). You can marry in the Lord but remaining unmarried has its benefits. To misquote American Express, “Non-membership has its privileges.”

### How does this teaching on the benefits of singleness relate to **singles**?

#### Remember there are many blessings to remaining single—so trust God to provide a mate for you only if and when it is His timing. Follow the advice of verse 27: “Do not look for a wife.” God doesn’t need your help!

##### One unmarried woman who died at age 87 was named Harriet Hartbyrne (really!). She wrote in her will, “I don’t want anyone to put ‘Miss’ on my tombstone—I haven’t missed as much as people think!” Tan 5744

##### Edith Hammond is the oldest friend that Susan and I have—she’s also one of the most positive. She was born in 1895 and has never married—maybe that’s how she made it to 103 years old! She has lived a wonderful, full life of service to others.

##### There is much to gain from remaining single! You might even live longer! But more importantly, for you singles…

#### Serve God wholeheartedly in your single state.

##### Don’t just think that because you are single, therefore you are as verse 34 says, “devoted to the Lord in body and spirit.”

##### Singles can live just as selfishly as marrieds—perhaps even more!

##### Follow the models of singles among us like Lily Pang and Grace Oey—in their singleness they serve God and us wholeheartedly. Do what Val has done—helping Seng Chuan and Lee Huang for several months in Tajikistan—something most of us marrieds couldn’t do.

### But how does this teaching on “Why Stay Single?” relate to us marrieds?

#### Don’t pressure singles into marriage.

##### Many of them like it that way and they find support from the Apostle Paul!

##### One well-known single is Chuck Swindoll’s sister, Luci Swindoll. She says, “As a little girl, I always liked the idea of a single lifestyle. In never consciously wanted to marry. I had high goals. I wanted to sing professionally. I wanted to travel. I realized that if I married, I wouldn’t have time to accomplish these goals. Also, I thought my temperament needed solitude and was not suited to the responsibilities that marriage and a family required. I didn’t think I could blend into my husband with my whole heart. Quite early, God revealed to me that I would be better off not to marry” (SINGLENESS benefits of).

##### In fact, once in the year 1234 a man in France named Jean Poqueron preferred hanging over marriage! You see, he was sentenced to death for being a habitual thief, but was told that he would be released if a pure maiden was willing to marry him. An ugly but willing orphan girl stepped forward. But Jean took one look at her, shook his head and said, “No! I’d rather marry the gallows—Hangman, do your duty.” So he was hanged. (Tan 5742).

#### So you 50 and 60-something folks, don’t be nagging your children (or others), “When are you going to get married?!”

##### Some aren’t called to it! (Remind me that I said this in about 15 years, OK?)

##### Since most churches in Singapore have 2 or 3 unmarried Christian women for every one unmarried Christian man, we need to come to terms with this

### Again, we’re back to where we started last week—contentment. Ultimately, contentment is not found in any relationship other than that primary relationship with Jesus Christ.

 **Preliminary Questions**

**Verses Questions**

Context What did the author record just prior to this passage? In this chapter Paul has already addressed those married (1-7), widows and singles in general (8-9), divorcees (10-11), and those contemplating divorce (12-16). He told them all to be content in their present state (17-24). Now his attention is turned towards virgins specifically.

Purpose Why is this passage in the Bible?

Background What historical context helps us understand this passage?

25 Must we obey what Paul says here since he says that Christ didn’t teach it? (In other words, is Paul’s authority sufficient to obey?) Paul clarifies this issue in verse 26—Jesus didn’t specifically address what Paul’s going to say, but that doesn’t mean what we have here is not inspired and authoritative for us.

26 What was the present crisis?

 How would not changing one’s marital state help? In some areas we can control our amount of stress brought about by new situations (stress scale).

27 Does Paul’s admonition apply to all times?

28 How do marrieds face more troubles than singles? Is this true of all time or limited to Paul’s day?

29 How was time short? time for what?

29-31 What’s the unifying point in these descriptions? Hold things loosely in life since each of them is temporal anyway.

32 Is being free from concern the main idea of the text?

32-35 Is Paul saying that married people can’t serve Christ?

32-35 Is Paul saying that single people always serve Christ more than marrieds? No again!

36-39 Does this text refer to a father (NASB) or male fiancé (NIV)?

37 What does it mean for the man to have “control over his own will”? Does it mean he has control over his sexual passions? Verse 9 would seem to indicate so.

39 Does this mean that only death breaks the marriage bond?

 Is a divorced woman free to remarry if her husband is also remarried?

 Does his remarriage then mean that the first marriage bond is broken?

40 Why did Paul say widows who don’t remarry are happier than widows who do remarry?

**Tentative Subject/Complement Statements**

How can you simplify your life? Remain single! And if you’re married, hold things loosely.

Stress-free living is easier when single or holding things loosely.

You can best serve Christ as a single—but marriage is still allowed.

**Subject:** Singleness has its advantages (especially during difficult times)

**Complement:** but marriage isn’t prohibited.

**Possible Illustrations**

Best not to get married during the Japanese occupation (= present crisis)

2 or 3 Christian women for every 1 Christian man

Sec. 1 students staying up later (more independent) and dating earlier (not starting dating at age 21 in past days)

Next month Susan and I celebrate our 15th wedding anniversary—funny to speak on a subject like “Why Stay Single” at a time like this!

“What are you doing?” a rich man asked a poor man.

“Fishin’.”

“What for? Looks like you’re wasting your time to me! Why don’t you do something with your life?”

“And what are you doing with yours?”

“Well, I’m glad you asked. I’m a successful professional, one of the top in my field.”

“Why?” the poor man replied.

“What do you mean, ‘Why’? To be able to make a lot of money.”

“But why would you want to make lots of money?”

“So someday I can relax, take life easy, enjoy stress-less living!”

“Well, that’s what I’m already doing right now.”

‘Twas the night before my wedding, and all through the house,

Not a creature was stirring—’cept this future spouse!

My good friend named Albert came near to show care—

in hopes to glean wisdom from this bachelare!

**Why Stay Single?**

***1 Corinthians 7:25-40***

**Exegetical Outline**

***Exegetical Idea:* The reason Paul advocated singleness during the Corinthians’ trials was because it has many advantages.**

# I. The reason Paul preferred the Corinthians to remain single in their perilous times was because singleness has many advantages (25-35).

## The preference of Paul was for singles not to marry (25-28a).

### Paul had no direct command from Christ for never-married females at Corinth so he would state his own opinion (25).

### Paul believed the Corinthian crisis made it best for people to stay in their present marital state (26-27).

#### Marital decisions should be put on hold (26).

#### Marrieds shouldn’t seek a divorce (27a).

#### Singles shouldn’t seek a spouse (27b).

### Even still, marriage is not prohibited (28).

## The reason singleness is more desirable than marriage is because it has key advantages (28b-35).

### Trials: Singles don’t have some troubles that marrieds do (28b)

### Time: Singles have more time to invest in eternal matters (29-31)

#### Times of persecution remind us that time to do God’s work is short for us all as Christ can come at any moment (29a).

#### Believers shouldn’t be preoccupied with worldly things (29b-31a).

##### Marrieds shouldn’t become so preoccupied with their families that they can’t effectively serve Christ (29b).

##### Those mourning shouldn’t let it interfere with serving Christ (30a).

##### Those rejoicing shouldn’t let it interfere with serving Christ (30b).

##### Those shopping shouldn’t let it interfere with serving Christ (31a).

#### The reason we shouldn’t be preoccupied with worldly things is because they don’t last (31b).

### Distractions: Singles can serve God in ways that marrieds can’t (32-35).

# II. The exceptions to remaining single apply both to those never married and to widows (36-40).

## A marriage concession is allowed for an unmarried man with sexual temptation towards his fiancée who’s getting too old (36-38).

### A man tempted towards sexual sin with his fiancée should marry her (36).

### A man convinced he shouldn’t marry his fiancée shouldn’t marry her (37).

### It’s better not to marry in perilous times but it’s not prohibited (38).

## A remarriage concession is allowed for one whose spouse has died but this is not preferred by Paul (39-40).

### A woman’s marriage bond is broken by her husband’s death (39a).

### Remarriage to a believer is allowed only after the death of a former spouse (39b).

### Widows are generally happier if they don’t remarry (40).

**Homiletical Outline** (Cyclical inductive form)

# Introduction

### International Day of Prayer for the Persecuted Church.

### It’s best not to make major life changes during perilous times (examples).

### Christians in Corinth were undergoing a difficult time.

#### We don’t know the details.

#### We do know he encouraged the marrieds to be content with their present state (17, 20, 24).

#### Now in verse 25 he gives advice to singles applicable to difficult times.

### Paul’s preference was for singles not to marry (25-28a).

#### Christ said nothing about never-married females at Corinth so Paul would state his own opinion (25).

#### Paul believed the Corinthian crisis made it best for people to stay in their present marital state (26-27).

##### Marital decisions should be put on hold (26).

##### Married couples shouldn’t seek a divorce (27a).

##### Singles shouldn’t seek a spouse (27b).

#### Even still, marriage is not prohibited (28).

### Subject: Why stay single—especially in difficult times?

# I. Singleness has its advantages (28b-35).

## Trials: Singles have fewer troubles than married folks (28b)

## Time: Singles have more time to invest in eternal matters (29-31)

## Distractions: Singles can serve God in ways that marrieds can’t (32-35).

# II. Marriage still isn’t prohibited (36-40).

## Singles should get married if sexual temptation is too strong (36-38).

### A man tempted towards sexual sin with his fiancée should marry her (36).

### A man convinced he shouldn’t marry his fiancée shouldn’t marry her (37).

### It’s better not to marry in perilous times but it’s not prohibited (38).

## Widows can remarry too (39-40).

### A woman’s marriage bond is broken by her husband’s death (39a).

### Remarriage to a believer is allowed only after the death of a former spouse (39b).

### Widows are generally happier if they don’t remarry (40).

# Conclusion

### Singleness has its advantages (especially during difficult times) but marriage isn’t prohibited (M.I.).

### How does this teaching relate to singles?

### How does this teaching relate to married couples?

**Introduction**

It’s best not to make major life changes during crisis.

Why stay \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ —especially in difficult times (25-28a)?

**I. Singleness has its \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_** **(28b-35).**

A. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_: Singles have fewer troubles than married folks (28b).

B. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_: Singles have more time to invest in eternal matters (29-31).

C. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_: Singles can serve God in ways that couples can’t (32-35).

**II. Marriage still isn’t \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_** **(36-40).**

A. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ should get married if sexual temptation is too strong (36-38).

B. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ can remarry too (39-40).

**Conclusion**

1. Singleness has its \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (especially during crises) but marriage isn’t \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (Main Idea).

2. How does this teaching relate to singles?

3. How does this teaching relate to couples?

**Introduction**

1. It’s best not to make major life changes during perilous times.

2. Christians in Corinth were undergoing a difficult time.

3. Paul’s preference was for singles not to marry (25-28a).

4. *Subject*: Why stay single—especially in difficult times?

**I. Singleness has its advantages (28b-35).**

A. Trials: Singles have fewer troubles than married folks (28b).

B. Time: Singles have more time to invest in eternal matters (29-31).

C. Distractions: Singles can serve God in ways that couples can’t (32-35).

**II. Marriage still isn’t prohibited (36-40).**

A. Singles should get married if sexual temptation is too strong (36-38).

1. A man tempted towards sexual sin with his fiancée should marry her (36).

2. A man convinced he shouldn’t marry his fiancée shouldn’t marry her (37).

3. It’s better not to marry in perilous times but it’s not prohibited (38).

B. Widows can remarry too (39-40).

1. A woman’s marriage bond is broken by her husband’s death (39a).

2. Remarriage to a believer is allowed only after the death of a former spouse (39b).

3. Widows are generally happier if they don’t remarry (40).

**Conclusion**

1. Singleness has its advantages (especially during difficult times) but marriage isn’t prohibited (Main Idea).

2. How does this teaching relate to singles?

3. How does this teaching relate to marrieds?

 **Rick Griffith**

 13 January 2013

 *Message 10 of 24 in “Becoming Who We Are” 1 Corinthians Series*

**Why Stay Single?**

***1 Corinthians 7:25-40***

**Introduction**

It’s best not to make major life changes during crisis.

Why stay \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ —especially in difficult times (25-28a)?

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1. Singleness has its \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (especially during crises) but marriage isn’t \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (Main Idea).

2. How does this teaching relate to singles?

3. How does this teaching relate to couples?

**Home Group Questions:**

1. Read 1 Corinthians 7:25-40 aloud. Contrast:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Married Life** | **Single Life** |
| concern about the affairs of this world (33) | concern about the Lord’s affairs (32) |
| Sexual fulfillment (36-38) | Sexual abstinence  |
| Divided interests (34) | Undivided devotion to the Lord (32) |
| Text | Text |
| Text | Text |
| Text | Text |

1. What is the most significant misunderstanding your generation has about singleness?

“Singleness is not cool”

“All singles are unhappy”

“Singles are that way because they can’t get married (too poor, no sexual desire)”

“Singles are incomplete”

1. How specifically should *you* change based on this passage?

“Be the kind of person you want to marry”

Text