

September 13th, 2020



Session 6

7:1–40

Our days on this earth are numbered, and we must continue to live in the hope of our future lives with Jesus in eternity. Paul reminded us that in every season of life, whether married or single, our lives are about Jesus.

No matter your relationship status, God has a plan for you right where you are—and it's a beautiful plan.

Take a few moments to reflect on the season you're in. What are the situations in your life that frustrate you the most? What are you most happy with? How do these perspectives have an effect on your overall attitude about life? Living a content life doesn't just happen overnight—we have to change our perspective and allow Jesus to be the center of our lives.

1. Life Stages: Married

There are many myths that come with being married. We can swing between a high view of marriage as the ultimate goal and marriage being something casual that can easily go away with a divorce.

What are some common myths about marriage that we hear today?

In what ways does the culture today present marriage as the ultimate goal or the only way to fulfillment?

Marriage is a beautiful union that was created by God. It is a display of our spiritual union with Christ. But it isn't our ultimate goal—serving God with our whole heart is.

Read 1 Corinthians 7:1–34.

Paul discusses the benefits and purpose of staying married to an unbelieving spouse rather than divorcing. **What does Paul say is the purpose of staying married to the unbelieving spouse? What are the effects that come when the unbeliever leaves?**

Divorce rates are at an all-time high. The media makes it easy to believe that divorce is a simple way to leave a marriage if you don't like your spouse anymore, aren't attracted to them anymore, or because your finances have changed. **What does Paul use as a reasonable reason for divorce in verses 15-16? What has God called us to do if an unbelieving spouse decides to leave?**

In verses 18-20, Paul uses an illustration of circumcision to describe how we experience various situations in life, concluding that the state you're in doesn't matter. **What does he say actually matters? What does Paul ask for us to do in our various situations?**

In what ways can accepting the situation we're in help us learn contentment? In what ways can accepting our situations strengthen our trust in God?

Paul reiterates in 7:32-35 that being married is a good thing but can cause a division of interests. **If you're married, what has been your experience trying to remain dedicated to spiritual things due to your relationship? How have you found a rhythm between focusing on your relationship and your spiritual growth?**

Paul tells the Corinthians that celibacy outside of marriage is a good thing, but also makes a case for the goodness of marriage. **What reason does Paul give for celibacy being unrealistic for some people? What kind of advice does he give for avoiding sexual immorality?**

In what ways can marriage be a benefit to those struggling with self-control?

What are the concerns that Paul says married people have? If you're married, what similar concerns have you had in your relationship?

What do these verses say about the responsibility of a married man or woman?

The goal is to live well and obey God wherever he's placed us. That means caring for your spouse if you have one. **What can you do this week to better care for your spouse? If you're single, what could you do to encourage your married friends?**

2. Asceticism

Some scholars agree that part of the Corinthians' issue regarding sex and marriage was their participation in asceticism.

Asceticism is the self-denial, self-discipline, and avoidance of any sensual pleasures or indulgences for the sake of spiritual goals. When we first read the definition, it doesn't seem so bad. We all need to live a life with spiritual disciplines like fasting, celibacy, and meditation. But asceticism was damaging marriages when spouses avoided sex within their relationship.

Read 1 Corinthians 7:1-7 again.

What are Paul's guidelines for sex? What does he say about the right to our bodies as married couples?

What stipulation does Paul give for abstaining from sex within a marriage? What reason does he give for not doing it often or for a long time?

Paul lets the Corinthians know that if they are married, they should not deprive one another from sex. He even assures them that Satan may tempt them if they lacked self-control. There was no need to abstain from the physical world so that it hurt their marriage. **How did the Corinthians allow a good practice to be turned in to a negative one?**

Legalism occurs anytime we keep a strict adherence to rules without any faith, which results in believing we can gain God's approval through our own hard work rather than being helped by the Spirit. **When, if at all, have you allowed a good practice to become a negative one due to legalism? When can spiritual disciplines be abused to the point of becoming a hinderance to our spiritual growth?**

What is one area in your life that you have become legalistic about? What could it look like to give yourself more grace in that area this week?

3. Contentment

We all have a tendency to long for what we don't have. When we're single, we want to be married. When we're married, we miss the single life. Paul wants the Corinthians to know that, regardless of relationship status, being content in the Lord is what is most important.

Read 1 Corinthians 7:17-24 again.

What are some situations that make it easy to want what we don't have?

Why can it be damaging to our spiritual lives to place our relationship status on a pedestal?

What has God taught you through your various life stages?

Contentment is an issue of the heart. People who are single and discontent in their singleness can be just as discontent when they get married because our varying relationship statuses don't change our hearts. **When, if at all, have you been discontent with your life based on your relationship status? What did God teach you through that situation?**

What kinds of circumstances can keep us from having a positive mindset regarding our relationship status? How can a new perspective about our relationship status help us walk in contentment?

What could seeking contentment look like for you this week?

4. Life Stages: Singleness

Paul desires for the Corinthians to learn contentment as they walk through various relationship stages. Whether single, married, or divorced, there is a way to be content and faithful to the Lord in that season. Studying what God says about singleness can not only help us if we're single, but it can also help those of us who aren't single be able to empathize, encourage, and walk alongside those who are.

Read 1 Corinthians 7:25-36 again.

What does Paul want singles to take advantage of? How does he present his case for singleness for those who are already engaged or married?

Paul desires for the Corinthians to take advantage of whatever life stage they were in, without feeling obligated to change it. **In what ways does focusing on the lives of other people contribute to our current desires?**

What comparisons does Paul make in verse 32-34? What are the concerns of the married person versus the unmarried person?

How does Paul end his advice in verse 35? What does he say is the purpose of his advice?

Being single isn't a prison sentence—it's a gift from God. There are many messages that single people receive from the world, and even the church. **What are some common myths that we hear about singleness and its value compared to marriage?**

Paul explains that singles have a great advantage in that they can serve the Lord wholeheartedly without the burden of tending to a family. This is not to say that being married or having a family is burdensome, but in singleness there is freedom to travel, work, serve, and spend money for God. **What are some other advantages to being a single Christian? How can the freedom that comes with singleness be beneficial to our spiritual journeys?**

If you're married, take some time this week to pray over your single friends. If you're single, spend time being honest with God about your attitude toward singleness.