

Single by Choice

Matthew 19: 3-12; 1 Corinthians 7:1-9

July 21st, 2013

Series 13

My wife and I just celebrated 33 years of marriage. After 33 years of marriage, she still doesn't like to watch TV with me. It was one thing when we first got married and we only had three channels, but now, we have hundreds of channels. I have a remote, and you would think after 33 years of living with her, I would know what she is going to do, but she comes in while I am watching TV and the first thing she asks is, "Where is the remote?" I show it to her and she grabs it out of my hand and hides it! The reason is because I like to watch as many programs as I can, at the same time...When I watch TV, I always want to see what I am not watching. I want to know what I'm missing. Yesterday we had the grandkids and I had a few free moments, so I had the British Open on the upstairs TV. It was glorious, but I knew I was missing the Tour De France. I tried to switch back and forth, but my wife was taping the program, so I couldn't. So, I had to go downstairs and watch the Tour on the little bedroom TV. But when I watched it, I knew I was missing the Open, so I would run back upstairs and watch it for a while. I did this a few times, wow, I need to be in better shape!

As we continue talking about our Dream Home Series, I want to talk about a subject that we don't talk about much in the Church, but I believe it's

very important. It is being a Christian single. We are going to talk about building or remodeling a dream home as a Christian single. I realize there are some who are single by choice, but there are others who are single by circumstance. I believe there are some Christian singles that are living like I watch TV. They cannot enjoy their life as a single because of what they are afraid they are missing out on. They hear us talk about marriage in such glorious terms, and many wish they were married. I don't want anything in this lesson to cancel out what we have studied concerning marriage. But we need to see the perspective of a Christian single.

Scripture

"And Pharisees came up to him and tested him by asking, 'Is it lawful to divorce one's wife for any cause?' He answered, 'Have you not read that he who created them from the beginning made them male and female, and said, 'Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh'? So they are no longer two but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate.' They said to him, 'Why then did Moses command one to give a certificate of divorce and to send her away?' He said to them, 'Because of your hardness of heart Moses allowed you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it was not so. And I say to you: whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another, commits adultery.' The disciples said to him, 'If such is the case of a man with his wife, it is better not to marry.' But he said to them, 'Not everyone can receive this saying, but only those to whom it is given. For there are eunuchs who have been so from birth, and there are eunuchs who have been made eunuchs by men, and there are eunuchs who have made

themselves eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of heaven. Let the one who is able to receive this receive it." (Matt 19:3-12)

The disciples asked a question that most would not have asked; isn't it better not to marry? Whoa, did you hear that? If marriage is a permanent state, if they are bound to each other with no way out of it except adultery, they concluded that maybe it was better for a man not to take a wife at all! But Jesus told them that not everyone could do that, only if God gave that gift to them.

Scripture

"Now concerning the matters about which you wrote: "It is good for a man not to have sexual relations with a woman." But because of the temptation to sexual immorality, each man should have his own wife and each woman her own husband. The husband should give to his wife her conjugal rights, and likewise the wife to her husband. For 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. Do not deprive one another, except perhaps by agreement for a limited time, that you may devote yourselves to prayer; but then come together again, so that Satan may not tempt you because of your lack of self-control. Now as a concession, not a command, I say this. I wish that all were as I myself am. But each has his own gift from God, one of one kind and one of another. To the unmarried and the widows I say that it is good for them to remain single as I am. But if they cannot exercise self-control, they should marry. For it is better to marry than to burn with passion."
(1 Cor. 7:1-9)

Principle for a Christian Single

We will address those who are single by circumstance in the next lesson, but in this lesson, we will address those who are single by choice. Based on our Scripture reading, I believe the principle that a Christian single should live by is this:

Live where you are, with who you are, for Christ.

- **Where You Are**

As a Christian single, you live in what I will call Singleville. I want to encourage you because there is nothing wrong with living there! If you live there, you aren't living on the wrong side of the tracks, or the wrong part of town. You aren't in a substandard subdivision. But, I believe that we do not live in a world that is geared towards singleness. I believe our world is geared toward couples. The majority of those in our church are married. We have been married so long that we cannot imagine what it's like to be single. I married right after school and moved immediately from my mom and dad's house to living with my wife. I was never "single." I imagine it is hard for singles to go down the hallways to the classrooms here, as room after room is filled with married people. Going to a restaurant, you notice that they aren't designed for single people. The smallest table you can find is a table for two. A table for two is a place of intimacy. But most of the tables are for four. The only place there is for one is at the bar. But even there, they put bar stools right next to another, believing you need someone close to you in your life. I believe the world subtly sends the message that it's not good to be single. I believe that most single people feel like they are missing out on being married. Most single people live with a for sale sign on the front lawn of their life. It says that you are ready at any moment to move from Singleville to marriage. In the Church, we prize marriage, and we should. But we haven't acknowledged that there are always exceptions to the rule. It is ok to be an exception. It's ok to acknowledge that you are going to live as a single, for five or ten years, or the rest of your life, and it isn't a sign that there is something wrong with

you. Now, there could always be something wrong with us, but being single does not mean that something is wrong.

But listen, it is better to be in Singleville and wish that you were married, than to be married and wish that you were single. Those of you who are Christian singles; you are completely free. If you are single by choice and have never been married, you are free at any moment in your life to move out of Singleville into Marriageville! But, if you are married, you are not free. You are bound to live in marriage. But we have to be careful, because if we do not do uphold Christian singleness as a call from God in some people's life, we will have people living in Singleville living their whole live believing they are on pause while waiting for Mr. Right to come along. Then after a few years, they will settle for Mr. Ok. After a couple of years into the marriage, they realize that he wasn't Mr. Ok, he was Mr. Wrong. That is a sad place to be when you wake up ten years into marriage, and three kids later.

In 1 Corinthians, the Bible says that in Singleville, you are free from trouble. If you think you have problems, you don't even know what problems are until you get married, according to Paul. The Bible teaches that if you move out of Singleville into Marriageville, you will wake up every morning anxious about how to please your spouse or children. I wouldn't know what it would be like to wake up and think, 33 years, two kids, and three grandkids later, *what would I like to do today?* It never goes through my mind. I wake up wondering what my wife or children need from me. I have had plans before and then we get the grandkids, and I just forget about those plans. As a Christian single, you don't have that thought. Your thought is *how can I please the Lord?* So as a Christian single, enjoy where you are at and learn to live where you are, in Singleville.

- **Who You Are**

Then, learn to live with who you are. Let me just say, if you don't like living with yourself, there isn't a man or woman who would like living with you either. The biggest mistake that single people make is to believe that

marriage will solve their problems. Marriage will never solve your problems. I want to remind you of the truth that there is a difference between being alone and being lonely. Alone is a state of physicality. Loneliness is a state of emotion, or state of mind. You can be alone and not be lonely. You can also be lonely and not be alone. If you don't learn to live with who you are as a Christian single, you can marry for the wrong reason, attach yourself to the wrong person, and still not satisfy that need to not be alone. There are many, many ladies that sit in our services that are lonely, but they aren't alone. Therefore, I suggest to Christian singles not to learn to live alone, but learn to live in solitude. There is a difference. In solitude, you can have inner contentment and inner peace, and enjoy who you are as a unique creation of God, designed for His honor and glory. That doesn't make you self-centered. But if we aren't careful in the Church, when we teach Genesis 2, which teaches that God designed every man and woman to be married, then we teach single people to live their life waiting for Mr. or Mrs. Right. We end up living in a state of singleness looking for someone else, concentrating on them instead of concentrating on who we are in our intimacy with Christ. We take that marriage principle of one plus one equals one, and we teach a single person that they aren't whole or healthy. They believe they are one half, or three fourths of a person. I see it all the time. If a woman believes she is three fourths of a person, then she believes she needs a quarter of a man. A man might believe he is one half of a person, so he looks for one half of a woman. But when it is really bad is when you were raised in a home where the father was absent, or a total dictator, and you see yourself as a nothing. You look for Mr. Perfect, and go into a relationship believing you have nothing to offer. That isn't healthy.

For Christ

So, I believe that we should teach what the Bible teaches on the exceptions to the rule of marriage; there are those designed to live as a single. And those people should live where they are, enjoying where they are, and not be looking. They shouldn't put their life on hold, but while

they are living in this state, they should learn to live with who they and who they are under. They need to learn to live for Christ. Those of us who are married learn to live for our spouse, as well as Christ. But if you are single, you live for Christ alone.

This past week, I had to make a decision and have practiced it all week long. According to 1 Corinthians 7, I don't just live for Christ; my loyalty is divided between my wife and family. I only have 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. But in this new age of technology, and as a pastor of a church, my phone keeps me very busy. So I decided I needed to have a new standard. I am only going to answer my cellphone from 6:30 a.m. to 6:30 p.m. Now, my wife, kids, and grandkids aren't complaining, but I am responsible to live as a married man. So I am not going to answer the phone after 6:30 p.m. I will check the phone, but not during supper, or times of intimacy...or during the British Open. There have been many times that I have answered the phone at 11:30 p.m., or even 1:30 a.m., and the person on the other end said, "I didn't expect you to answer; I was just going to leave you a message!" If you didn't expect me to answer, then why did you call?! I am a pastor! If you call me at 1:30 in the morning, I am wondering who died, who had a stroke, who is in jail! I think that same thing at supper.

I am saying this because if you are in Singleville, you don't have to do that. You don't live for your family, you live totally for Christ. That is the freedom you have that a married person doesn't. Quit looking at what you are missing and enjoy what you have; true freedom to serve Christ! If you are a single person, you need to read John Scott. He lived to be 90 years old. He was celibate his whole life, wrote more books, and has influenced Christianity more than probably any other man on the planet.

Did you know that the Chronicles of Narnia was written by a single man? He didn't marry until later in life. I am not saying that a married man can't write something good, but there have been some great things come from

the life of people who have devoted themselves to being single. They realize they are married to Christ and serve Him.

John Scott warns us about two temptations when living single, and they are both biblical.

1. Sexual Temptation

This is true especially in this society. You cannot even buy a car without sex selling the car. You cannot go to the mailbox without being tempted in this society. So your standard has to be that sex is for two people in marriage, not for two people in love.

As a Christian single, you have been bought by the blood of Jesus Christ, and your body is the temple of God's Holy Spirit. So think of your body as belonging to the Holy Spirit, and think of it as the temple in the Old Testament. There were three parts, an outer court, an inner court (the Holy Place), and the Holy of Holies. In your outer court, it is ok to have friends, but you never let friends come into the Holy Place. As a Christian single, there are some people that you must always keep at a distance. You can mingle and be acquainted, but you don't let them inside, you keep them outside. Then you have the Holy Place that you invite certain people into. But these are special people, people that aren't a threat, or won't harm you; they are safe. Then, you have a Holy of Holies. In the Old Testament, there was only one person who could come into the Holy of Holies. As a Christian single, you are never to let anyone come into your Holy of Holies, except your husband or wife. Until that person becomes your spouse, they are to never pull that veil back and come into the Holy of Holies. We have to avoid sexual temptation.

2. Temptation of Self-centeredness

I cannot imagine how it would be to wake up and wonder what I wanted to do today. I wake up wondering about my family. But even as a single Christian, you can't wake up that way either. Your life doesn't belong to you, it belongs to Christ. You have to realize there will be a temptation to

put yourself first and do what you want to do. You will never be fulfilled as a Christian single if you do. You have to truly put Christ first. You have to live for Him and let your life totally revolve around Him. He has gifted you with the ability to live single by choice. It is a high calling of God, and He has a plan and purpose for your life.

Now, it will hit you one day that you will never have children. Your name will never be carried on, so to speak. But, if you dedicate your life to the glory of God, you will never know all of the spiritual descendants who will honor you in death because of the life you poured out.

John Scott was affectionately known as Uncle John. They tell me he had thousands of people who called him that! When he came into a place, he never had to rush home to his wife or children. He poured his whole life into Christ and became a spiritual giant in the life of so many. That is God's plan for you; maybe just for five or ten years, but don't live your life on pause or waiting for someone. Learn to live where you are, with who you are, for Christ. Glory in being single and remodel your life to this principle.