

# **Single by Circumstance**

## **2 Corinthians 1:3-4**

**July 28<sup>th</sup>, 2013**

### **Series 14**

This is our last lesson in the Dream Home series, but I pray that you will continue to build and remodel your dream home. In the last lesson, we addressed those who were living single by choice. There are a significant number of people in the Church who are living single by choice. Based on Matthew 19 and 1 Corinthians 7, they recognize that they have received a special gift from God, a gift of singleness. They are not waiting to get married or putting their life on pause until they get married. They aren't living a second class life, but living and fulfilling God's purpose and will for them in singleness. We tried to encourage them to live where they are (in Singleville), with who they are (themselves), for Christ. But there is another group in the Church who are also living single, and it is not their gift from God. They are single by circumstance. Generally, these circumstances are either the death of a spouse, or the death of their marriage because of divorce. I want to address those who find themselves single by circumstance. I will build on the principles of Matthew 19 and 1 Corinthians 7, but we will read 2 Corinthians 1:3-4. I think if you find yourself in these circumstances, you will understand why I am using these verses. You probably won't understand if you have never been in this circumstance.

I read a statistic this week that says that 50% of females in the U.S., 18 years and older, are living single. At the turn of the century, it was 5%. Half of our females in America are living single because of divorce. 12

million of the ladies in our society are living single by the circumstance of death, while only 2 million men are living single because of death.

## **Scripture**

***"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God."***

As a pastor, my heart hurts when I think of those who are single because of a circumstance. That circumstance could be the death of a spouse that you loved very much and had years invested with. All of a sudden, you find yourself single again. Or, it could be that your spouse chose to kill your marriage, and you are single again because of divorce. I prepared this message with you in mind, and also for those who are rearing daughters and sons who might find themselves in that circumstance.

I want to build on the same principle that we need to learn to live where we are, with who we are, for Christ. I believe that must be the dominate principle of your life if you find yourself in that situation. I know I have never experienced this personally, but after studying God's Word, believing that He is the all comforting God who comforts us in our time of suffering, I want to give seven specific principles. Each of these might not apply to you specifically, but in general, I believe they will.

### **1. You must give yourself time to get off of the emotional rollercoaster.**

Rollercoasters are fun at amusement parks, but they aren't fun when you find yourself single again because of the death of a spouse or divorce. But you have to be prepared for the ups, downs, twists, and turns. There will

be times when you cannot tell if your life is right side up or upside down. Those emotions are going at such a fast pace that by the time you get over the one you just had, you are in the middle of another. Sometimes, two or three hit at the very same time. You have to give yourself time. Under God, with Christ, the Spirit of the Lord living inside you, on biblical principles, in a relationship with Jesus Christ, that rollercoaster will end.

Now, it normally starts with shock. You still remember where you were when you got the news that he died. You still remember the look on his face when he told you that he was leaving. Even if you knew that it was coming, you were shocked. Then you denied it. You tried to live as if this wasn't true. Then you will get really, really angry. In that state of anger, you will move into an emotion where you blame him for the situation you are now in. That blame will be followed by sadness, which even as a Christian can have the tendency to turn into depression. There is just no way of knowing how many times you will ride this rollercoaster round and round. But one day it will end and when it does, you will step off with this thought, *he's gone. I won't see him until Heaven, or I'll never be with him again as a wife.* Then, you will accept it.

People have different rates of recovery. Some secular psychologists say that for every year you have invested with another, it will take half of that time to accept that it's over. Even Christian counselors say that it will take at least a month for every year you have invested. If you have a twenty year marriage that ends in divorce, it will take at least two years.

## **2. You must grieve.**

When you lose a spouse, you not only have to grieve the death of the spouse, you must grieve the death of the marriage. We put these together, but they are two separate things. The person suddenly doesn't have their spouse, but they also aren't married anymore. They have to grieve that.

When a person goes through a divorce, they have to grieve. They aren't grieving the death of a spouse, but they are grieving the death of the marriage, wishing the spouse was dead!

Sometimes, we don't let couples in the Church grieve the death of the marriage. Everything the Church has taught of the primary relationship of the husband-wife is gone, and we are trying to tell them to get over it! We should be allowing them to get through it. As they get through it, they will get over it. We have people in the Church who have been divorced for three years and have never gotten over it. They never got over it because they never got through it.

There is a grieving process that has to take place mentally, emotional, and spiritually, whether it is a death or a divorce. Mentally, you have to grieve the questions of how to live without his income; how to get four kids where they are supposed to be? Emotionally, you are sleeping single in a king size bed; you are preparing a meal for just you again. You have to grieve spiritually: *God, I had hoped I would be married for 60 years!* You have to grieve because that wasn't God's plan for your marriage. He knew when you married when He would call your spouse home. You have to grieve knowing that God didn't allow him to have that affair that ended the marriage, but why did He allow it? Ultimately, you have to accept God's provision for your life.

### **3. You must forgive your spouse.**

I am talking about death and divorce, but I will deal with divorce first. You have to forgive. I know what they did, I know it was horrible and they shouldn't have done it, but you can't change it. You have to forgive them, not because they deserve it, but because it's the right thing to do. When you forgive your spouse for an affair, or whatever, you aren't forgiving them to release them to go and live a happy life. You are releasing them so that you can go on and live a godly life. You don't forgive your spouse for their sake; you do it for your sake and for God's sake.

Matthew 18 teaches a principle about forgiveness that you will understand if you find yourself divorced. If you don't forgive your spouse, God will deliver you to the tormentors and torturers. You will blame your spouse for the rest of your life, but in reality, it's not your spouse's fault for that situation. You were delivered by God to the tormentors for not forgiving. When you forgive, you aren't saying what they did was right. You are saying that you are right, and you are going to stay right. You won't let what they did cause you not to be right with God.

Now, some of you will be shocked by this, but even when you lose a spouse to death, there are still things you have to forgive them for. I see this a lot with women. You blame him for the financial mess you are in, or for the shape the property is in. You have to let that go. When you release them from the bad choices they made, you aren't doing it for their sake; you are doing it for your sake. If you don't, those things will eat you up. You will think that what they did causes you to be the way you are, but in reality, who you are is who you have let yourself become because you won't let go.

#### **4. You must look at yourself in the mirror.**

I'm not talking about a physical mirror. But it is amazing how some people physically change after a divorce, yet never change emotionally or spiritually. Especially after a divorce, you have to look at the mirror of God's Word and realize that this was probably not a one-way street. He probably was absolutely as bad as you thought he was, but you are probably not near as good a wife as you thought you were. Now is the time to look at yourself and make those life changes that are less and less like Adam, and more and more like Christ. Truth be told, you have known about some of these things for a long time, but you were in a covenant relationship and didn't think it really mattered, so you never worked on it.

Most married couples become so one in their marriage that we really have to accept our part for the mess we're in when our spouse dies. They didn't do it all by themselves, you did it together. If you will look in the mirror

and accept your part in where you are after they are gone, you will become the person that God wants you to be. Then you won't grow old and bitter, but will become better and better because of your response to the Word of God in your life.

### **5. You must focus on your life and not the death of the marriage.**

I think you need to replace words like I can't with I can. You need to replace I don't know how to I will learn how. No matter how much you enjoyed being married; you have to come to terms with being single. No matter how much you might wish you were dead; you are alive. There is a tendency to focus on death and quit living. Let me remind you that your God is not dead, He is alive. He didn't leave or abandon you. He didn't sin against you and is there for you, and you are alive. You have to choose life, and to remodel your life to live single by circumstance.

### **6. You must believe that God has a plan for your life.**

No matter how short the marriage was, or how long you lived with your spouse, you have to trust that God used them in your life and still has a plan for you. If you continue to walk with God, He will comfort you in your suffering, and you will realize you aren't the only one to have gone through this. You will see a ministry or opportunities that you have never seen before. You will be able to comfort others with the same comfort that God gave you.

I know that as your pastor, you want me to show up when a death or divorce occurs, but in the back of your mind, you must be thinking that I really don't understand. I will be there with you, but the ones who should be there as well are the ones who have been in your circumstance and have been comforted. They know the shock, denial, anger, blame, sadness, depression, acceptance, grief, forgiveness, repenting, refocusing in your life, and know God still has a plan! When they say what they do, no one can say that they don't understand. The very comfort they give you is

the very comfort that God has given them. Then, more people will come to know who God really is; He is the God of all comfort. Live where you are, with who you are, for Christ. That is the ultimate desire as a Christian.

### **7. You must remember that you only have to be you.**

This is so big! If you are a divorced woman with children, you never have to be Dad. A man never has to be Mom. I take issue with what society says. I don't believe that children's lives have to be ruined when you are single by circumstance. I will always believe that Mom and Dad should be married if they are going to raise children. But when God calls a young father home and leaves four children behind, we should never pity those children for being raised without a dad, and pressure the mom to be both mom and dad. A mom cannot be a dad, and a dad cannot be a mom.

With the empowering of God's Holy Spirit and the mercy and grace of God, I have seen a mother whose husband left her, and she was who she was supposed to be, a mom. Now that she doesn't have a husband, she is the best mom she can be. It is amazing how some of those moms can earn doctorates and raise children who are never arrested, come to know the Lord, and serve Him for the rest of their life. God honors a mom who is a single mom by circumstance when she is who she is supposed to be. It's the same way with a dad.

But you have to remember that if you will quit blaming and accept and change your life to who you are supposed to be, you will be a wonderful example to your children. What an example you will be to others who are single by circumstance. You only have to be you! But you have to be you; you cannot do what a lot of moms are doing. There are a lot of moms giving a half effort because they have a great husband, and it's the same for dads. But you don't have that luxury; you have to dig down really deep and be who God called you to be, and it will be enough. You will discover that your parents will take an amazing interest in their grandkids. Your brothers or sisters will take an interest, or someone in the Church will take an interest. God will be your provider if you will give the rollercoaster time

to stop and grieve, forgive, repent, focus, trust, and remember you only have to be you. You can remodel your home that the tornado almost wiped out. It may have taken your spouse out of your life, but it didn't get you.