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SINGLE LIFE

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Dennison, John

At least 30-35% of the adult population is currently living the single life. In the Old Testament there was a clear stigma to being an adult single; this was to be avoided at almost any cost. The perception was that happiness and God's blessing could not be found outside of marriage and children. While marriage is still God's plan for the majority, He does call some to live a single life temporarily or permanently. It is not because God "has it out" for some believers relegating them to a second-class life of drudgery and dreaming. The New Testament clarifies the Old Testament mindset and perhaps a traditional western cultural mindset as well. Single believers can have useful, fulfilled, and completely satisfied lives for good reasons.



Because it is good

Read Genesis 1 and listen to the staccato pattern of "It was good." Who decided that it was good? Good is an absolute standard that is found in God's essence. All creation was consistent with His person, His plans, and His Word. Of course, it could not be criticized, improved upon, and would be the very best for Adam.

But then God showed Adam, "it is not good for man to be alone." Notice please that He did NOT say "It is not good for a man to be single." Many believers and commentators jump to that conclusion and thus apply His words to the sexual side of man (so he could reproduce). While that might be included, it is also referring to more than just the fact that God gave Him a woman to be His emotional help. More likely it refers to how God would fill a void in Adam; this void was filled by another human being. It is not that God alone could not meet that need Himself, but rather that, in Divine providence, His choice instrument to help fulfill Adam's role to fill the earth was, of course, a woman.

This does not mean that a single brother or sister is lacking. It just means that single believers must recognize the need of others in their

role for the Lord, whatever that may be. Obviously, it is not a role of childbearing and spouse caring, but still there will be others involved in completing a role for God.

Paul suffered great loneliness at times, especially when his coworkers forsook him, but he first found full satisfaction and fulfillment in the Lord Who always stood by him. He then recognized his need for other workers to help fulfill the mission that God had for Him, which is why he mentions dozens of fellow helpers in His role and mission to take the gospel to the Gentiles.

For a couple married in the Lord, each spouse is intended to help the other reach their full purpose and usefulness for God. As a single man, Paul knew that God could meet his needs alone or do so through others. He wrote with honesty when he said, “I say therefore to the unmarried and widows, it is good for them if they abide even as I” (1Cor 7:8). Singlehood does not lack anything as God can meet any true needs to accomplish His will directly by Himself or indirectly through others.



Because it is a gift

God does not practice April Fool’s day. James says that “Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with Whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning” (James 1:17).

Paul shared the same sentiment when he wrote about civil status to the Corinthians. He said, “but everyone has his own gift of God: one man thus, and another thus” (1Cor 7:7). So, which is better, marriage or singleness? Wrong question! According to Paul, they are, equally, gifts from God. Even better, every believer has “his own gift.” The Lord has personally selected the civil status that is best for you right now. Therefore, both the married and the single believer need to view their civil status the way God does, which is that He has personally given you the gift of being married, or the gift of being single, at this very moment.

Therefore, Paul is putting the current civil status of the believer in a new perspective. This is not some special empowerment to live alone,

that without which life would be miserable or impossible. This is a privileged position given by God. Do you really think an omniscient, omnipotent, omnipresent Lord would give you a gift as a cruel joke? Never! His immense love matched with His infinite wisdom gives each believer whatever civil status is best for them at any given time. Wouldn't it be appropriate then, to thank Him for whatever civil status gift you have today? No wonder Paul wrote with such enthusiasm about the single life.



Because of its guidelines

One day on the coasts of Judea the Pharisees tossed the Lord Jesus a spiritual and political “hot potato,” hoping he would get severely burned. They questioned Him about divorce, a topic that had led to different camps and much heated debate. Masterfully, before answering their question on divorce, He instructed them on marriage, emphasizing the permanence of the marriage bond. When the disciples heard the Lord prohibit divorce for “any reason” (a very common notion and practice at the time), they quickly concluded that if marriage was so binding, perhaps it was better not to marry.

The Lord Jesus went on to explain that for some people it is good not to marry because they are born with a capacity to live that way or they are made eunuchs by men. In other words, circumstances in life have so made them that they are not interested in marriage or able to be married. As well, He then mentioned a third case that describes almost all Christian singles today. He said, “Some have made themselves eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of Heaven” (Matt 19:12). Christian believers are not single because nobody found them desirable or because they could not find anybody. They are single only because they have taken and applied principles of the Kingdom of Heaven to their lives.

The goal in the heart and life of a Christian is to live out God's will according to Scripture. In a very practical way of thinking, consider the narrowing of choices when a spiritual single believer says, “I love the Lord and will follow His guidelines. Therefore, I will not consider dating and marrying any person who is not saved (unequal yoke) and any believer who is not fully committed to the Lord's will, Word, and

work (marry in the Lord).” For the sake of the Kingdom of Heaven, this believer is choosing to limit possibilities down with the guidelines of the Word of God for His glory. Let’s be real. With nearly 7,000,000,000 in the world, any believer could easily get married. Imagine the joy in God’s heart, though, when a believer chooses to honor the King in devotion to His will and Word and remains single for a short time or a lifetime.



Because of the goal!

Singleness is never viewed in the New Testament with anything less than absolute excitement. Paul was so thrilled at his life as a single believer that he said his personal preference would be that others live single as well. His reason was, “He that is unmarried careth for the things that belong to the Lord, how he may please the Lord” (1Cor 7:32). Singles have fewer responsibilities (no spouse) so that they can give themselves to greater involvement in His service. According to Scripture, married believers serve God in their marriages by serving one another and their families. Singles, though, are free from occupying their minds, emotions, time, and financial resources to care for a spouse. Their personal and financial resources can be directed into unique and exciting ways to please the Lord. How inspiring for singles to know that their choice of singleness will open unique opportunities as to what they could do and be for God.

Consider the Lord Jesus. His sojourn here was singly devoted to His Father and the Kingdom of Heaven. He obeyed and fulfilled Scripture completely. He manifested the perfect life and we can safely draw from the pure guidelines in His life – whether we are single or married.

Therefore, perspective on the single life is key. Choosing to be single for your own career, your own hobbies, or your own liberty is disobedience to Scripture. However, if God calls you to serve Him and others as a single believer, His plan is best for you. Satisfaction, fulfillment, contentment, and usefulness are all available to the Christian single. Taking God’s perspective, “you may learn by experience what God’s will is – that will which is good and beautiful and perfect” (Rom 12:2 *Weymouth New Testament*).



Higgins, A. J.

This article would carry the weight of experience if it came from the pen (keyboard) of one of our single brethren. However, an editor always serves as the default writer when a series is lacking in writers. The only comforting thing is that the principles of the Word of God are true whether they come from a single person who has experienced and known them, or a married person who expositors them from the Word of God. So, bear with the writer as we explore and profit from the Scriptures.

Security! What is it? For many it is an elusive mirage linked with money, pensions, homes, husbands (or wives), connections, power, or position. But can security be found in any of these? More germane are the questions: does God intend us to find our security in any of these? Were we made to be anchored to things and people? Were we designed to find security in what depends on so many variables and unpredictable events? Is a woman to find security in a husband? While God intends that a husband make his wife secure in his love, her ultimate security is not in him.

Traverse the streets of the small village of Bethany; come finally to a small home in the village. There are lessons to be learned here. As we open the door we are greeted by three people: Martha would undoubtedly be the first to rise and welcome us. Mary, being contemplative, would likely be eyeing us and wondering about our visit. Lazarus might eventually come to meet us and welcome us as well. Though Scripture is not definitive about the marital status of this small family, there is good reason to believe that here were three single, unmarried people. They possessed differing personalities and temperaments, learned through differing avenues, and appreciated different aspects of truth; yet each found security in something other than the tangible, visible, and material. Lessons about security can be learned in this household.



The Sovereign Who Controls

Forget the advertisements which link a good night's sleep to a particular mattress or pillow. The greatest pillow upon which one can rest her head at night is the pillow of His sovereign control of all. Nothing happens outside His wisdom and love. His power is omnipotent, and it is all used for the blessing of His own.

John 11 tells us that the Lord knew that all was designed for the glory of God and the blessing of His own: "This sickness is not unto death but for the glory of God" (v 4). The illness that overtook Lazarus was not only known to the Lord but allowed. He took no pleasure in the tears and grief of a family; He found no secret pleasure in the sorrow that filled hearts or the questions that filled minds. Yet He saw beyond the present to the ultimate joy and spiritual growth the occasion would bring.

There is One Who is sovereign in every aspect of your life. Your singleness has not escaped His notice. It is not some aberration of His will or some mistake in His plan. He has not given you second best and asked you to "grin and bear" it as your lot in life. Every circumstance allowed by Him in life is for His self-revelation to your soul.



The Sovereign Who Conceives

The life you have is given to you by God. Centuries earlier, David, amidst days of despondency when it seemed that his sorrow was so great that "deep called unto deep," came to the realization that everything came from the hand of the One he called, "the God of my life" (Psa 42:8). His life was conceived by, and planned by, God. Not only is His power operative, but His love and wisdom are equally active in formulating that plan. He never gives second best to those who belong to Him. His planning is not reactive to the events which occur in life. He is proactive, planning each step, each trial, each circumstance. He never has to resort to alternative plans because of failure on His part.

He conceives and carries out His grand design for your life and mine. These are not mere platitudes which come easily from the lips; they

are the reality of life as received from His hand and lived under His eye.



The Sovereign Who Cares

“Now Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus” (John 11:5). Where can security be found? In the same love He bore for these three single believers. If sovereignty controlled the events that were allowed, then sympathy and love controlled His response to everything. Did they need highly connected persons to help them? Did they require the material things to give comfort in their sorrow? Did their wealth enable them to escape the inevitable loneliness of the loss they incurred? His tears meant more to their hearts than all the words and wails of the professional mourners. His presence brought greater comfort than all the well-intentioned comments of the townspeople.

He cares! Your life is not out of control. Your circumstances are not a test of your fortitude. They are permitted to enable you to learn something of Christ which others may not learn. He, in Himself, is the ultimate security which God intends us to have.



The Sovereign Who Conquers

We may not see resurrections from the dead or miracles of a similar nature, but what the Lord is working in your life is the very same goal: “Said I not unto thee, that, if thou wouldest believe, thou shouldest see the glory of God?” (11:40). Perhaps His hand in your life is not as dramatic, is less awe-inspiring to the masses, and is less worthy of the headlines in the newspaper, but it is just as real and just as much a revelation of all God is. As He works out His plan for your life, and as you rest in the security of His control and care, He conquers – and you conquer with Him.

Ultimate security in life is found in a Person – and only in one Person.



Dennison, John

God makes no allowance for Christian victims or believers who whine, “I just can’t help it” or “I don’t know why I do it.”

Peter never made excuses for his sin either. He even wrote to persecuted believers that tough times do not change God’s standard of holiness. He calls them not to live like the ignorant, unsaved people they once were, but rather like the Lord Who said, “Be ye holy, for I am holy” (1Peter 1:14, 15). God does not relax His standard for extenuating circumstances or because we have sinful natures. There is no permitting, pandering, or pitying a sinful life, whether married or single. Holy or sanctified living is a must in every believer’s life.

In 1 Corinthians 7, Paul deals frankly with the subject of human passion which has only one divinely sanctioned outlet. It is for enjoyment and blessing ONLY within a marriage relationship. Therefore, as noble as a single life for God may sound, He wants some believers to marry so they do not burn or become distracted and destroyed by passion. If God, Who knows a believer best, provides a partner in His will, that believer can happily and obediently marry in the Lord.

For others whom He equally loves, God knows they can live successful sanctified lives for Him as single believers. That does not mean single believers are immune to passions and temptations. To the contrary, they will need to be exceptionally vigilant as the enemy will seek to destroy them especially since they have no marriage partner to whom they can direct their passions in a holy and honoring way (Heb 13:4).

God’s standard for sanctified living is a living standard. The Lord Jesus is the perfect example of practical sanctification. While He uniquely did not and could not have sinful impulses, nevertheless, the

Bible gives us a secret to His sanctification when it says that He “loved righteousness and hated iniquity” (Heb 1:9).

A Revulsion To What Is Wrong

First, note the negative side. He hated iniquity. It wasn't just that sin and perversion didn't attract Him. Far from being neutral and tolerant, He abhorred everything that was unholy, impure, incorrect, and improper. With His conscience aligned with God's Word, He detected and was repulsed by the slightest breaking of the law. He would never laugh at a dirty joke or enjoy watching a video of someone else's sin. He would get righteously angry at the hardness of the hearts of the religious leaders (Mark 3:5). His hatred for anything that opposed His heavenly Father would compel Him to make a scourge, flip tables, dump out cash boxes, and drive greedy men from the temple.

Therefore, a major key to keeping yourself sanctified is to have a zero-tolerance policy toward sin. In the subdivision where we lived in Mexico, we had a guard at the entrance. He was trained and armed (with a cell phone), but often sound asleep. Sometimes, believers are trained to know right and wrong, but are asleep at the gate. Daily, active vigilance filtering all influences in our lives is vital to maintain a sanctified life. Anything that smacks of unrighteousness should be shown the door immediately.

Paul, a single man, told the believers in Rome, “Make not provision for the flesh, to fulfill the lusts thereof” (Rom 13:14). “Make not provision” occurs just twice in the Bible and is translated “foresight” (*ESV*) when it is used the other time in Acts 24:2. It is the idea of giving consideration. Be so vigilant when it comes to wrong and defilement that you won't even give it consideration in your heart and mind. This will keep unholy attitudes from turning into unholy actions.

A Hunger For What Is Holy

Meet Heavy Harvey. He looks in the mirror, sighs, and then tips the scales at 320 pounds. He vows to lose weight. He skips breakfast. All

day he craves chips and pizza but refuses to go to the candy machine at work. As he drives, his head bobbles as he speeds past McDonalds. His stomach screams to be filled, but he steels his jaw as he envisions a juicy Quarter Pounder.

Meet Growing Gretta. She looks in the mirror, sighs, and then tips the scales at (of course I can't say, she is a woman). Gretta vows to change. At breakfast she eats yogurt and fruit. Lunch is a spinach-with-almonds salad and water. Supper is a flavorful dish of shoots, roots, and fruits. Snacks all day are cut veggies and green tea.

See the difference? One is focusing only on what he should not eat. The other is focusing on filling herself with good, healthy foods.

The other half of the equation for successful sanctification in the life of the Lord Jesus was that He "loved righteousness." He filled His heart, mind, and life with what was good, pure, and spiritually healthy. He sought out and enjoyed things that were in line with the Word and will of God.



His Communication

Before the Lord Jesus came to earth, He could have said, "Then I was by Him, as One brought up with Him: and I was daily His delight" (Prov 8:30). Forever, the Son was with the Father delighting His heart. When He came to earth, nothing changed. "When He cometh into the world, He saith ... 'Lo, I come ... to do Thy will, O God'" (Heb 10:5-7). He was in constant contact with His God. He filled His waking hours with communication to God in prayer and communication from God through the Scripture.

Single believers must diligently discipline themselves to fill their minds and schedules with communication and communion with God.



His Companions

Married people should be best friends. Single people are also social beings as was the Lord Jesus Who guarded His friendships and social interactions with great care. True, He was a friend of publicans and

sinner, but never just because He was lonely and needed to talk. Instead, He carefully interacted with them to share the gospel while always maintaining a clear distance from the defilement of their interests and lifestyles.

Also, He actively became friends with others who shared His interests and activities. What a joy, blessing, and help to have a life full of people who share your values and convictions. Paul practiced this as well, as in almost every letter he mentions names of friends and fellow workers.

But please be clear. Whether it was with the disciples, Mary and Martha, or the “women who ministered unto Him,” the Lord Jesus was always careful; no one ever accused Him of anything inappropriate.

Single believers today need to fill their lives with friends, both single and married, and give themselves to reaching the unsaved. Yet, in all friendships and communications there needs to be a conscious and careful effort to maintain holiness. In our modern world where male and female coworkers travel together and with E-mail, MSN, texting, Facebook, etc., both singles and the married need to be very careful to guard the sanctity of marriage and the holiness of communications.



His Concerns

A married person cares for their spouse because that spouse is from the Lord. A single person has all that “care” they can share with others. Paul says they can channel that capacity to care for the things of God.

So, then, could a single person today fill their schedule with companions, concerns, and communion with God such that they could have little time for anything unholy? Could a single believer today have their heart so full of holy concerns that there would be little room for unholy passions? Try it, you just might like living more like God’s perfect Son.



Higgins, A. J.

Is it wrong to speak about a person feeling “significant?” Isn’t Christianity all about being occupied with Christ and not with myself? Is a person’s quest for significance really a façade for self-occupation and pride? Perhaps. Yet even before the entrance of sin, at the dawn of time, God allotted to Adam a sphere of responsibility and labor, and to Eve a role to fulfill. All this was not mere “busy work” to keep them occupied. It was meant both as a training school and a sphere of satisfaction and fulfillment. We are hardwired to thrive on responsibility and fulfillment.

The Lord Jesus promised that those who are His sheep will know “life ... more abundantly” (John 10:10). This life involves the fellowship and enjoyment of divine persons. But it also embraces a fulness of life as life was meant to be: full of a sense of purpose, meaning, direction, and satisfaction.

What develops a sense of significance for any believer? What imparts to what I am doing and invests in my life a sense of importance, meaning, or significance?

The home in Bethany with its three inhabitants affords fresh insights into this aspect of the single life once again. Notice that the love of Christ and His interest in them imparted a sense of significance to their ...



Location

What put Bethany on the map? What made it an important place? Doubtless there were a myriad of similar small villages strewn throughout Israel. Yet it is recorded that Lazarus was sick in Bethany, “the town of Mary and her sister Martha” (John 11:1). Bethany was the town of these three believers. What imparted importance, what placed it on heaven’s radar screen, was that it was where three believers, three people who loved the Lord Jesus, lived.

There may well have been others of greater social importance who graced the village. Homes may have been more elaborate and spacious; some may have been involved in the politics of the day and wielded greater influence in the marketplace. All that meant little to the heart of Christ. It was the presence of those He loved that made it an important place in His movements.

The presence of a believer in a town, office, school, or dormitory, is what makes it important to heaven. Your presence lends significance to what is otherwise insignificant.

His love and interest also gave significance to their ...



Labor

The service-worship of Mary in John 12 had value only in so far as it brought honor to Christ. Had she used the ointment on herself, it would have been natural. Had she used it on Lazarus at his burial, it would have been sincere and kind. But when she used it for Christ, it elevated her service to its highest possible level. It invested it with a rare value which has not diminished to this day. It has known nothing of depreciation.

What gives significance to what you do as a single believer for the Lord (or any other believer, for that matter) is that it is being done for Him. The accomplishments of men, while significant in the sense of results, cause few ripples in heaven. What a believer does, if done for the Lord, carries incalculable significance.

That 8-to-5 job at which you work, that Sunday school class you teach, that effort you make with your students at school, those hospital patients you try to comfort and speak to – all of this is valued by heaven. Even labor in the secular sphere, if done as to Christ (Eph 6:5), is important to the Lord. Slaves, by their honest and diligent labor, were able to “adorn the doctrine of God” before their unbelieving masters (Titus 2:9, 10). So significant was the secular labor of these believers that they were promised a recompense from the Lord Himself for their day-to-day work (Eph 6:8).

Mary's deed was prompted by her love for the Savior and her awareness of His impending death and burial. Yet, her act not only thrilled and delighted His heart, but it set in motion a series of events which furthered the purposes and timetable of God (Matt 26:14-16).

You may feel your efforts are limited as you look at married couples and their work for God. But the God Who controls your circumstances, also infuses value into your labor and appreciates all that is done for Him. His love is what gives significance as well to your ...



Life

Does being single make a person a second-class Christian? Does it mean that you are somehow not as important as those who are couples, those who seem to be in the places of prominence? Are you “incomplete;” not a full “person”?

There is a tendency, tragically, for many to view unmarried believers as somehow being “deficient” or not measuring up. Their singleness implies something must be wrong with them. Some single people view themselves as being “on the shelf” or marking time until they are married and can really begin to live.

The Lord does not have any second-class Christians. If those of us who are married imply or treat others who are single in this manner, then we are at variance with heaven. Each believer is of equal value to the heart of the Lord Jesus. “Now Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus.” Notice how each is named individually. How interesting that Martha – whom we usually deprecate because of her supposed failures in John 11 and Luke 10 – is named first. Mary is “her sister.” So, there is hope for all Marthas who are trying to be Marys.

Completeness as a person is not found in a spouse but in Christ (Col 2:10). It is not marriage which enables a person to be the full personality which God intended him or her to be, it is being in Christ! Only then can a person truly be fulfilled and complete.

The life of every believer, whether married or single, is significant because it has direction – it is a life planned by the Omniscient Lord. It carries purpose as it forwards the will of God and the honor of His Son. It possesses meaning as it adds to the eternal purposes of God. All of this gives significance to each life.



Higgins, A. J.

No state of life – single, married, widowed, young, old – has an advantage to being spiritual. Likewise, none has disadvantages greater than the other. The greatest barrier to spirituality is not our circumstances in life arranged by God but the pull of our flesh toward a self-centered and self-pleasing life. So, the good news is that a spiritual life is open to every single person. The bad news is that every single person has a tremendous barrier to spirituality – the flesh.

Whether we are looking at the single years which prepare for marriage or the single state as a permanent position which has been ordained by God, these years afford unique opportunities for spiritual development and growth. The wonderful reality is that our God is so resourceful that He is able to use whatever circumstances He has brought into our lives to further spiritual dependence and growth. The critical, and life-altering, issue is how we react to those circumstances. Bitterness, self-pity, anger, living only for the prospect of marriage, and a host of other rebellious responses serve to move us away from the lessons God would teach and the development He is seeking to foster in our souls. Submission, being marked by being “willing and obedient,” will result in eating “the good of the land” (Isa 1:19). The choice confronts every person in single years.

Paul spoke of the single state as a time when an individual could more fully “care for the things of the Lord” (1Cor 7:34) and be able to devote time to the Lord “without distraction” (v 35). Some might sneer that these are small compensations for the loneliness and sense of rejection which may accompany being single, but an appreciation of the fellowship of the Lord can hardly be viewed as minor compensation.

Consider the single person in several different scenarios. Think first of the home. While a single person, if living alone, will have to attend to issues such as cooking, cleaning, washing, etc., all these can be

done on a personal schedule without regard to meeting the time demands of a spouse or children. As a result, time can be set aside for personal study of the Scriptures, for special occasions of prayer when burdens are greater, and for entertaining other young believers to share in spiritual conversation and mutual encouragement. Contrast this with the married brother who, after work, comes home to help care for children, taxi them to and from school events, maintain the upkeep of a home; or the mother who has endless laundry, a mountain of dishes after the family dinner, children to bathe and put to bed, and a large home to clean, before she can sit down with her Bible or think of praying. By then exhaustion has robbed her of the mental freshness so needed for time with the Lord.

What about assembly meetings? Next time you are at a conference, ask one of your married friends who comes with three children, a stroller, five bags of books and snacks, small soundless toys for the infant, and maybe her Bible, how much she was able to hear and get from the conference. Our sisters who are married bravely and sacrificially come to conferences with their husbands and children, yet are able to get very little from the ministry, at times, as they attend to the needs of children.

In local assembly meetings, many sisters sometimes miss night meetings due to small children, school schedules, and the fear of small children disrupting a ministry meeting. You can attend unfettered by all that and gain the good of the meeting. You are able to serve “undistracted” as Paul said. Few mothers are able to get to special ministry throughout an entire week or two. You are able to reap the blessing and profit of that without any hindrance.

But spiritual growth primarily occurs in private, alone in the presence of God. Whether married or single, the society in which we live is geared to rob you of that time. With increasing technology has come the paradox of increasing isolation yet constant intrusion into our lives. You will have to learn how to limit those intrusions and make time for private reading and praying; for not only reading but also for thinking about the Scriptures you have read. We used to call this meditation, a word that has fallen on bad times.

There will of course be the pull of the flesh, that tendency to look on the green grass on other fields and feel neglected, forgotten, and denied. Nothing will so hinder spiritual growth and usefulness as self-pity. Contentment with our circumstances is crucial. The contented man of Psalm 16 could say, “The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places. Yea, I have a goodly heritage” (v 6). Prior to this, however, he owned, “The Lord is the portion of my inheritance and my cup; Thou maintainest my lot” (v 5). Notice two distinct things here: the portion and the cup. The former, the portion, is what God has provided. The latter, the cup, is what I enjoy of it. Each believer has the same “portion” to enjoy. Unfortunately, our cups are not always the same size or drunk from as often.

A quick perusal of the Scriptures will reveal the value of the lives of many single believers. While we do not know the status of all with absolute certainty, some who were single and knew God in unique ways and served Him faithfully would include: Mary, Martha, Lazarus, Paul, Dorcas (most likely, from the context, a widow), Anna (a widow), likely some of the women who ministered to the Lord of their substance, possibly the apostle John, and others.

While many view the single life as a unique opportunity for “doing” things, spirituality is primarily about “being” and not “doing.” The time you have is precious time for learning God, looking upon Him, and developing in your capacity as a worshiper of the Living and True God. It is a time for becoming the spiritual person which God intends every believer, single or married, to become.



Dennison, John

Paul highly recommended marriage, but he also highly recommended singleness. He said, “And this I speak for your own profit; not that I may cast a snare upon you, but for that which is comely, and that ye may attend upon the Lord without distraction” (1Cor 7:35).



The Benefit

Notice all the positives he found in singleness. First it would result in betterment or “profit.” When God gives someone a single life, whether temporarily or permanently, He is not handing out some kind of a spiritual leftover life, nor is it a heavenly mix-up. Marriage is beautiful, but if we think living single in God’s will is anything less than the best, we are seriously underestimating and insulting the best life-planner in the world.

The Lord Jesus lived 33 years as a single man. Do you think God gave His Son less than the best life possible for Him? No wonder Paul calls it the “gift” of being able to live single. That means, if God calls you to live single for a short time or a lifetime, the Bible’s perspective is that He is “giving” you the opportunity to live single and the capacity to do so. It is not trying to put some artificial sweetener on a sour experience. From God’s perspective, it is a life full of opportunity, value, and purpose.

The Apostle Paul lived and loved the single life from the day he was saved until the day he died. Paul never speaks with resentment or rancor, but, rather, with gratitude and happiness that he was able to check the “single” box knowing he was in the will of God.

So, God goes far beyond wanting believers to “accept” singleness. Instead, He wants us to appreciate it. If you are single, what is your attitude towards God’s plan? Have you thanked Him today?



The Boundlessness

Paul desired others to live single as he did, but never wanted to bind them or “cast a snare.” Paul was not a bitter man wanting others to have to wallow in “the slough of singleness” so they would feel sorry for him. Instead he praised singleness with its freedom to serve God.



The Beauty

Paul also saw singleness as “comely” or honorable. In God’s eyes singleness has dignity when lived according to His will and with His help. “Comely” or orderly means that, like a puzzle piece, it fits perfectly into God’s plan for your life.



The Blessing

Finally, he points out that single believers “may attend upon the Lord without distraction.” To attend means to sit upon or to wait upon the Lord. Instead of working on a floor with many patients and doctors, a private nurse focuses on one patient and reports to one physician. This is the idea of a single life. It gives the ability to have a more intense, undistracted focus on the Lord.

Specifically then, in what ways can single people serve God? Look at the example of the apostle Paul and notice areas in which he was particularly “useful” as a single servant.

His Time: Paul had no one with whom he had to spend “quality time” other than the Lord. People who marry must devote time to their spouses and families. This is not wasted time, but rather a proper investment into what God has given them. A single person can take that same amount of time and devote it to other people and interests, as Paul says, “Making the best use of the time, because the days are evil” (Eph 5:16 *ESV*).

His Treasure: Paul worked as a tentmaker at times, but never had to buy food and clothes for a wife and children. When he went to Ephesus, he worked with his hands, as he said, “these have ministered to my necessities and to those who were with me” (Acts 20:34). The money he earned was for his limited expenses and the

rest was to bless and help other workers and believers. Paul celebrated the fact that single believers are free to direct a greater portion of their resources to the Lord's work and the Lord's people.

His Travels: Peter, a married apostle, spent most of his time in Jerusalem and Babylonia. Paul, a single man, went on several missionary trips lasting years at a time while he visited, lived, and preached in well over 30 cities. While it appears he stayed in Antioch for the longest periods of time, we never read of him owning a house. It is hard to imagine a married couple living like that, especially if they had children. Singleness allowed Paul an opportunity to be more mobile in God's service and to visit God's assemblies.

Single believers today are busy, but they do not have to work around "school calendars" for their children or devote time to a marriage. A single life can provide greater flexibility for travel to help believers, other assemblies, and even missionary efforts in other parts of the world.

His Thoughts: Believer M and Believer S have the same heart with the same capacity to hold burdens. Believer M is married and has three kids. A good chunk of his heart is filled with concerns for his spouse and children. That is Biblical and God's way of providing someone to care and serve them.

Believer S is single. That same section of the heart that is directed to concerns and service for a spouse and children in Believer M is now made available for God to direct towards _____?

God filled in the blank for Paul. He gave him the burden "for all the churches." Paul's heart was constantly full as he spoke of the "daily pressure on me of my anxiety for all the churches" (2Cor 11:28 *ESV*). His prayer time was loaded with concerns for assemblies where he labored such as Ephesus and for ones he had never visited such as Rome (Rom 1:7). Also, he prayed for individual believers (Phi 1:4) and for his own Jewish nation (Rom 10:1).

Single believers have the opportunity to fill their thoughts and hearts with believers who have no family praying for them, assemblies with needs, and perhaps other unique burdens that married believers

might not have time or energy to be concerned about. If you are single, does God have a particular burden He would like you to carry in your heart and prayers?

Paul says that “time is short” and “this world passeth away” (1Cor 7:29, 31). He then adds, “I would have you without carefulness (worry or distraction)” (1Cor 7:32). Single brother or sister, you have so much to thank God for and so much to offer Him in return. Paul would look at you with great enthusiasm, embrace you and say, “God has signed you up for some special elite training and service. Are you up for it?” What a blessing to devote all you are and have to your beloved Savior!