

## "Get Prequalified—The Minimalist Home"

I Corinthians 7; Matthew 19

- I. Introduction
  - A. There is a significant movement in American society today: the "tiny house" movement
  - B. This movement rejects the idea that bigger is better
  - C. This movement correlates to the minimalist home in terms of the single adult household
    1. According to the *Washington Post*, there are 109 million unmarried adults in the US
    2. 47 percent of all households in the US are single adult households
  - D. With this reality comes pressure from friends, parents, society, and the church
    1. It's as if, if you're single, you're less than the married person
    2. This creates the pressure that a single person then puts on themselves
  - E. Some are content to be single; some are obviously not content to be single
  - F. All of us live as singles for a time, so it must be normal
    1. Happily married people were at one time happily single people
    2. If you're not happy as a single person, you won't be happy as a married person
  - G. We need to consider singleness in the light of Scripture; many biblical heroes who were used powerfully by God were single
- II. The Single Life (I Corinthians 7:1)
  - A. The chaos of Corinth's corrupt, morally loose society brought up a lot of questions; Paul wrote to the church in Corinth to answer several questions about:
    1. A new believer who is now married to an unbeliever
    2. Divorce
    3. Celibacy
  - B. Paul said that it was good to be single and good for singles not to have sexual intercourse
    1. "It is good for a man not to touch a woman" (v. 1); this is a reference to the Old Testament use of the word *touching*
      - a. The story of Abimelech, Abraham, and Sarah (see Genesis 20:6)
      - b. Boaz told his men "not to touch" Ruth (see Ruth 2:9)
    2. Singleness, as long as it includes celibacy, can be a good thing
    3. Just because you're single doesn't mean you're alone
      - a. You don't have to lead a lonely life
      - b. Psalm 68:6
  - C. Singleness is good, but it's difficult
    1. Because you face certain pressures from society, family, and other Christians
    2. The pressure on a single, celibate life in America is daunting, and not everyone can do it—not everyone is called to it
    3. The pressure from married Christians who take it upon themselves to be matchmakers
  - D. Singleness is not just okay, but it can be important and valuable

1. There are so many practical advantages to being single (see vv. 32-33)
  - a. There is a greater flexibility and freedom to follow the Lord's call at short notice
  - b. Being married brings with it a certain preoccupation or responsibility: concerns for your spouse (as it should)
  - c. You can be wholeheartedly focused on the things of the Lord and what He is calling you to
2. Many great heroes of the Bible and the modern-day church were single:
  - a. Joseph: his greatest feat was accomplished while he was single
  - b. Daniel: the third ruler of the kingdom
  - c. Amos
  - d. Elijah
  - e. John the Baptist
  - f. Paul the apostle
  - g. Jesus
    - i. He accomplished salvation for the world
    - ii. "It is impossible to believe that the same God who permitted His own Son to die a bachelor regards celibacy as an actual sin" —H.L. Mencken
  - h. Origen
  - i. David Brainerd
  - j. Robert Murray M'Cheyne
  - k. Corrie ten Boom
  - l. Dietrich Bonhoeffer
  - m. Rachel Saint
  - n. John Stott

### III. The Celibate Life (Matthew 19:11-12)

- A. The celibate life requires a gift
- B. Divorce was rampant, both in ancient Corinth and in Judaism
  1. "She finds no favor in his eyes because he has found some uncleanness in her" (Deuteronomy 24:1)
  2. There were two schools of thought concerning what *uncleanness* meant
    - a. The conservatives agreed with Rabbi Shammai—*uncleanness* must mean sexual infidelity
    - b. The liberals agreed with Rabbi Hillel—anything that a husband saw as *uncleanness*
- C. Jesus told His disciples that "all cannot accept this...but only those to whom it has been given" (v. 11)
- D. There were three categories of celibacy in ancient times
  1. Eunuchs who were born thus
  2. Those who were made eunuchs by men
  3. Those who made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven—voluntary
- E. A life of single celibacy cannot be done without a gift, an enabling from God
  1. *Didómi*: to bestow a gift to one's advantage
  2. If you have the gift of celibacy, you *know* that you have this gift
    - a. You know either by nature or by choice

- b. God gives certain people the ability to withstand the pressures of this unique lifestyle
  - F. "It is better to marry than to burn with passion" (1 Corinthians 7:9)
    - 1. If you are unfulfilled without the sexual release from a marital partner, you're not called to celibacy
    - 2. "The Bible does not indicate that either gift is always permanent. Just because someone is single now doesn't mean they'll always be. And just because someone is married now doesn't mean they'll always be" —John Stott
  - G. If you can accept singleness as God's will for your life, then accept it; be obedient to God's call
- IV. The Sensible Life (1 Corinthians 7:27-28)
  - A. Cherish your life as a single person and take advantage of all it affords
  - B. Paul recognized the difficulties and pressures that are unique to married people—the pressure that results from two individual personalities coming together (*thlipsis*)
    - 1. Conflicts
    - 2. Demands
    - 3. Hardships
    - 4. Sacrifices
  - C. Learn to be content in whatever God has called you to do
  - D. If you are unhappy as a single person, you will be unhappy as a married person
- V. Conclusion
  - A. You must be called by God if this is going to be long-term
  - B. You must be kept by God, whether it's short-term or long-term
  - C. Just like it's wrong to be married and act single, it's wrong to be single and act married
  - D. Throw yourself wholeheartedly into the plan of God for your life; there may never be another time in your life where you have the freedom to serve the Lord like you do now as a single person
  - E. Say yes to His will for your life today, whether you're single or married

**Figures referenced:** Ann Kiemel Anderson, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, David Brainerd, Fred Hartley, Robert Murray M'Cheyne, H.L. Mencken, Origen, Rachel Saint, John Stott, Corrie ten Boom

**Cross references:** Genesis 20:6; Deuteronomy 24:1; Ruth 2:9; Psalm 68:6; 1 Corinthians 7:9, 32-33

**Greek words:** didómi, thlipsis

**Topic:** singleness

**Keywords:** celibacy, contentment, gift, obedience