

“And to the Unmarried...”

Introduction – Whenever you address a particular group in the body, there is a temptation for the others to think that God is not speaking to them. But that really isn't true and says more about our lack of understanding 'one body'. So each of us should take heed with a view towards a variety of applications.

Single In the Providence of God (Gen 2:15) – Before the fall, in the providence of God, Adam found himself single – in fact, not just single, but truly alone.

Not Good (v18ff) – God declares this is not good, and provides a helper comparable to him. We are taught this is the first marriage and that it is God's ordained way for a man and a woman to live together, and for a godly society to multiply, and for the earth to be full of godly garden-tenders.

Marriage is a Picture (Eph 5:30-32) – We are taught that this is an important declaration of the mystery of Christ and His one bride, the church.

But the Reality (Matt 22:30, Rev 21:2) – So the ultimate purpose of a man is not to be married, for no one will be married forever. But we will be devoted to the Lord forever. When the brightness of the sun fills the room, no one notices the 60 watt bulb.

Is Singleness Superior? (1 Cor 7:8-9, 25-40) – Paul seems to think so here, but would be contradicting himself elsewhere (i.e. 1 Tim 5:14). The best answer is, “it depends”. In the case at Corinth, there was a ‘present distress’ that determined the context of these teachings. But Paul warns that even in those circumstances, marriage is always preferable to sexual immorality.

Single Today; Not Necessarily Forever – In God's providence, you may be unmarried today. And that is God's will for you today – temporary celibacy. Be very careful about making any assumptions about tomorrow (James 4:13-16). Also, be very careful about worrying about tomorrow (Matt 6:25-34).

Clarifying the Gift – True celibacy is not a gift that gets you out of service, but rather frees you to a different intensity of service.

Paul's Celibacy (1 Cor 7:8, 32-35) – His gift did not cause him to be a hermit, a wall-flower, or free him up to watch a few more videos.

False Celibacy – Men can fall into the sin of laziness. It is easier in many respects to remain single. It is also far less risky, and a man whose pride has been pricked may be tempted to stay away. Women can fall into these sins as well. They may also fall into the lies of feminism, living as though marriage is an outdated form of abuse from the dark ages. These men and women will be more likely to fall into sexual immorality for their form of celibacy is not blessed.

Prepare and Pursue – With wisdom, men and women who faithfully desire to be married one day need to make preparations today.

For the Women – “*Therefore, I desire that the younger widows marry, bear children, manage the house, give no opportunity to the adversary to speak reproachfully*” (1 Tim 5:14) – Preparing for marriage does not mean daydreaming about boys. It means disciplining your mind and your hands for the good works ahead. It means thinking biblically about everything, from how you dress to how you will educate the next generation. Women who cannot take charge of a home in a godly manner slander the testimony of true godliness. While you're waiting, you have no obligation to put your life on hold – just don't go out there and act like a guy.

For the Men – “*Watch, stand fast in the faith, be brave (AV – “quit you like men”), be strong*” (1 Cor 16:13) – Men need to prepare themselves for marriage in their studies, in their work ethic, in their behavior. They must learn to take responsibility and not make excuses. They must learn tenderness and sacrificial grace-giving to others when it costs them a lot.

Physical Attractiveness – Let's not be Gnostics. Christian women, you need to hear that your looks matter. Dumpiness is not next to godliness. Immodesty may get his attention, but whether you mean it or not, it simply declares that you are promiscuous and that you want him to look. Simple and modest and feminine beauty is a lovely thing when dressed in and with good works (1 Tim 2:9-10).

Christian men, on the other hand, ought to be attracted to a woman, but that must be tempered with a greater understanding that a good husband will make his wife beautiful (Eph 5:27). You would do well to spend more time studying what the Bible teaches about objective beauty and less time comparing that girl over there to the Cosmo covergirl. She wouldn't be interested in you anyway.

The Attractiveness of Contentment “*...for I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content*” (Phil 4:11) – There is hardly anything more ugly than discontentment and ungratefulness. And if you think that you will solve that attitude by gaining a spouse, you are in for some hard surprises.

Principals to Think On –

- Adam was in covenant with God, and God took care of his needs. Stay faithful in the covenant and God will take care of yours.
- Deny the 'stigma', real or imagined, that singleness means there is something wrong with you. Don't lend credence to the lie by your behavior.
- Prepare and pursue marriage freely and biblically, without covetousness.
- Determine now the opportunities to service and devotion to the Lord that are especially available to you while still single. This is not the time to slack off.

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