

Reasons for Remaining Single, Part 2

Scripture: 1 Corinthians 7:32–40

Code: 1832

INTRODUCTION

A. The Design of Marriage

In the previous chapter, we studied several reasons for remaining single. It must be emphasized, however, that for the majority, marriage will be the norm. It is the relationship that God has designed for most people, and it is a sacred and holy thing.

1. Its stability

The Bible is replete with passages extolling the virtues of marriage. The apostle Paul in this very section of 1 Corinthians 7 says, "Let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband" (v. 2).

2. Its significance

Proverbs 18:22 says, "Whoso findeth a wife findeth a good thing." God looks on marriage with absolute favor and extols it as a good thing.

3. Its standard

Jeremiah 29:6 says, "Take to yourselves wives, and beget sons and daughters ... and give your daughters to husbands, that they may bear sons and daughters, that ye may be increased there, and not diminished." Although this was commanded by the Lord while the Israelites were in captivity, the general principle is for God's people to marry and procreate. Marriage is God's standard for the majority.

4. Its sacredness

In 1 Timothy 4:2-3 Paul explains that in the last days heretics will deny the Lord, "speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their conscience seared with a hot iron, forbidding to marry." According to the apostle Paul, that is heresy. Marriage is acceptable to God.

5. Its satisfaction

Hebrews 13:4 says, "Marriage is honorable in all, and the bed undefiled." God looks very favorably on marriage.

B. The Decision of Singleness

1. The implication

Marriage, however, is not the norm for everyone. God has given some the special gift of remaining single. They, unlike others, do not need to be married to fulfill God's will. They are, in fact, fulfilling God's will to its fullest when they remain single. The church has tended to categorize single people as abnormal, but God has specifically designed singleness for some. Paul's conviction was clearly articulated in 1 Corinthians 7:7: "I would that all men were even as myself. But every man hath his proper gift of God, one after this manner, and another after that." Paul is calling those who have the gift of singleness to remain that way. Those who don't have the gift are to marry. Some are gifted for marriage and some for singleness.

Singleness is a special gift of God. Single people do not need to be looked upon as if they are strange or abnormal. They are just as qualified for spiritual service as one who is married. Marriage is designed by God to complete two individuals who would otherwise be incomplete. But single people have been gifted by God to such a capacity that they may be the most complete of all. They are uniquely designed by God to function within the body of Christ, without the need for a mate.

2. The importance

Jewish leaders in Corinth were saying you had to be married. Greek philosophers were saying you could be more devoted to God by being single. The apostle Paul countered that by saying marriage and singleness aren't even the issue--spirituality is. He said in verse 20, "Let every man abide in the same calling in which he was called." Again in verse 24 he said, "Let every man in whatever state he is called, there abide with God." As if the reader were not paying attention, Paul says for the third time in verse 27, "Art thou bound unto a wife? Seek not to be loosed. Art thou loosed from a wife? Seek not a wife." The issue is not a person's marital status but his spirituality. Neither is inherently better; God designs some for singleness and others for marriage.

Paul realizes that those with the gift of singleness were going to be under tremendous pressure to be married. Society accepts marriage as the standard, and many times single people tend to be pressured into getting married. The pressure may begin with mom and dad all the way to peer pressure from nearly everyone else. Many church activities have family orientations and tend to leave out activities for the single person. The church must recognize that God has gifted some people for singleness and some for marriage. Neither is less significant than the other; they are simply different in His divine plan.

REVIEW

In 1 Corinthians 7:25-40, Paul gives six reasons for remaining single. For those who have the gift of singleness, Paul is giving encouragement to stay that way.

I. THE PRESSURE OF THE SYSTEM (vv. 26-28)

Paul says in verse 26 that those who are married will encounter pressure from the world: "I suppose, therefore, that this is good for the present distress, I say, that it is good for a man so to be." Paul realized the coming persecution under the harsh rule of the Roman empire and wanted to prepare the Corinthians for it. He was acknowledging that for those who were married, persecution would be far worse emotionally on them. Wives would be likely to face the death of their husbands and children the death of their parents. Family ties make the pain and anguish all the greater in times of persecution. If you have the gift of singleness, you won't have that pressure to the same degree should persecution befall you.

II. THE PROBLEMS OF THE FLESH (v. 28)

The second reason for remaining single is the problems of the flesh. In the middle of verse 28 Paul says, "Nevertheless, such shall have trouble in the flesh; but I spare you." It is not wrong to marry, but the apostle Paul wants you to know that you will have trouble in this life. Marriage frequently intensifies human weaknesses. You first have to deal with issues in your home, and then in the world around you. It adds friction to living. Marriage is wonderful when it occurs the way God designed it, but make no mistake about it, there still will be times of great difficulty.

III. THE PASSING OF THE WORLD (vv. 29-31)

In the last chapter, we saw another reason for remaining single: the passing of the world. Verses 29-31 say, "This I say, brethren, The time is short; it remaineth that both they that have wives be as though they had none; and they that weep, as though they wept not; and they that that rejoice, as though they rejoiced not; and they that buy, as though they possessed not; and they that use this world, as not abusing it; for the fashion of this world passeth away." Marriage is only a part of this world and will not occupy a place in heaven.

According to the apostle Paul, a single person is more easily detached from the world's relationships, emotions, pleasures, and commodities. A Christian, whether single or married, is to set his affections on things above (Col. 3:2). It is not wrong to have pleasure, purchase things, be emotional, or be married. Paul is simply saying that those things are wrong when they divert our attention from serving Christ. They become an attachment to the passing world.

When you marry, you will probably buy life insurance so that if you die suddenly, your children will be

taken care of. You have to save money for their future education as well. You also have to buy medical insurance for your family's physical needs. When your family grows, you buy a bigger house, and a bigger car because you are supporting a larger group. You also have to be sensitive to the psychological, emotional, and spiritual needs of your family. Paul is saying that there is much involved in being married that a single person could do well to avoid. If you have the gift of singleness and don't need to involve yourself in a marriage relationship, Paul's advice is that you are better off remaining single.

LESSON

IV. THE PREOCCUPATIONS OF MARRIAGE (vv. 32-35)

"I would have you without care. He that is unmarried careth for the things that belong to the Lord, how he may please the Lord; but he that is married careth for the things that are of the world, how he may please his wife. There is difference also between a wife and a virgin. The unmarried woman careth for the things of the Lord, that she may be holy both in body and in spirit; but she that is married careth for the things of the world, how she may please her husband. And this I speak for your own profit; not that I may cast a snare upon you, but for that which is seemly, and that ye may attend upon the Lord without distraction."

A. Divided Interests (v. 32-33)

According to the apostle Paul, those who are married need to be preoccupied with each other. He says in verses 32-33, "He that is unmarried careth for the things that belong to the Lord... But he that is married careth for the things that are of the world, how he may please his wife." Verse 33 should end, "His interests are divided." The best manuscripts contain this last portion. Both husbands and wives are concerned about the earthly needs of each other--as they should be. But one who is unmarried has the opportunity to be undivided in his devotion to the Lord.

1. A carefree attitude

Paul begins verse 32 by saying, "I would have you without care." He was trying to free the Corinthians of the anxiety that marriage would cause. Paul is saying, "I'd like you to have a carefree attitude about serving the Lord." J. B. Lightfoot, commenting on this verse, says that a man who is a hero in himself becomes a coward when he thinks of his widowed wife and his orphaned children."

2. A confident assertion

There are certain cares that encumber your mind when you're married. Paul says, "He that is married careth for the things that are of the world, how he may please his wife" (v. 33). A single person, however, "careth for the things that belong to the Lord, how he may please the Lord" (v. 32). The apostle is not saying that all single people are totally devoted to Jesus Christ. He is simply saying that the single person has the potential for that kind of devotion. He has but one set of cares: his own. The married person, on the other hand, has a divided set of cares: the Lord and his family. It isn't that those divided interests are bad; they're good and they're both designed by God. However, there is in marriage the inability for singlemindedness. Several passages speak to this issue.

a) Luke 14:17-20--In the parable of the great supper, Jesus said, "Come; for all things are now ready" (v. 17). However, one man replied, "I have married a wife, and, therefore, I cannot come" (v. 20). I wonder how many times in the history of the church there have been ministry opportunities open, but someone married and didn't go. It isn't wrong to marry, but maybe it would be better to remain single. b) 1 Corinthians 7:28--Paul said, "If thou marry, thou hast not sinned; and if a virgin marry, she hath not sinned." It is interesting to note that the gift of singleness is the only spiritual gift in Scripture that you have an option to use. Paul is saying to use it. But if you do not use it, you have not sinned. God never makes marriage a sin, unless of course it is to an unbeliever. It may be that God could have used a man and a woman differently if they had remained single, but He will also use them in their marriage.

B. Devoted Interests (v. 34)

The first part of verse 34, "There is a difference between a virgin and a wife," does not appear in the better manuscripts. The verse should read, "The woman who is unmarried, and the virgin, is concerned about the things of the Lord, that she may be holy both in body and spirit; but one who is married is concerned about the things of the world, how she may please her husband" (NASB). Paul is again reiterating that there is a dividedness for those who are married. It isn't wrong to be married; the dividedness is simply a fact. A single person, male or female, has the potential of a concentrated devotion to the Lord. A married person, however, must along with his devotion to Christ care for his family. This is what Paul meant when he said in verse 35, "Ye may attend upon the Lord without distraction."

A single person need not have any distraction from serving the Lord. How many times have you heard of a believer struggling to please his or her unbelieving partner and the Lord? What about someone who is married to a Christian who is in sin and tries to live a devoted life--struggling not to fall into sin themselves. You may even have a partner whose dedication to the Lord is outstanding and yet you are still limited in what you can do with the time you have.

1. Holiness

Paul says at the end of verse 34, "That she may be holy both in body and in spirit." The word holy basically means "separated." It is contrasted here with being divided. Paul is not saying single people are more holy than married people. Holiness is not based on your marital status, but on the righteousness of God imputed to you. There are many single people who aren't very holy and likewise, there are many married people who are. What the verse is saying is that the person who is not married can be separated unto God both spiritually and physically. He has no need to satisfy his sexual desires. And that makes for less spiritual encumbrances as well because he can concentrate fully on his relationship with Christ. The single person then, has a certain liberty in serving the Lord.

2. Harmony

The married person need not have divided spiritual loyalties. But practically, the unmarried person, both in body and spirit, is potentially able to set himself apart from the things of this life more exclusively for the Lord's work. Married Christians should not feel guilty about being married, and unmarried Christians should not feel guilty about getting married. The apostle is not trying to add to the burdens and cares that married persons already have, and he is not trying to force single believers into the permanent mold of singleness. Paul's conviction is only for those who have the gift of singleness. He clearly says in 1 Timothy 5:14, "I will, therefore, that the younger women marry." He recognized the innate need for most young women to marry. If you put an undue burden on them to remain single, many will have problems who never had God's gift to remain single. But if you do have the gift, remain that way, for there is greater potential for service and devotion to the Lord.

C. Distracted Interests (v. 35)

Paul adds verse 35 to avoid confusion: "This I speak for your own profit; not that I may cast a snare upon you." Paul was not creating a legalistic noose (the literal meaning of the word snare); he simply wanted those with the gift of singleness to know "that which is seemly, and that ye may attend upon the Lord without distraction." It isn't that you have to stay single at all cost, even if you have the gift for it. It is not a command; you have the option. Paul is saying, "I'm telling you only for your own good. If you have the gift, you'd be better off using it." The Corinthians were not under compulsion either to marry or to remain single. He had two beneficial motives in advising them to remain as they were: He wanted to spare them trouble (vv. 28, 32), and he wanted them to have undistracted devotion to the Lord (v. 35). It must be emphasized, however, that marriage does not prevent great devotion to the Lord, and singleness does not guarantee it. Singleness has fewer hindrances and more advantages. It is easier for a single person to be single-minded in the things of the Lord.

1. The negative example of Martha

Luke 10:38-42 provides a good illustration for those who desire to serve the Lord without distraction: "[Jesus] entered into a certain village; and a certain woman, named Martha, received him into her

house. And she had a sister, called Mary, who also sat at Jesus' feet, and heard his word. But Martha was cumbered about much serving, and came to him, and said, Lord, dost thou not care that my sister hath left me to serve alone? Bid her, therefore, that she help me. And Jesus answered, and said unto her, Martha, Martha, thou art anxious and troubled about many things. But one thing is needful, and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her."

Jesus was in the home of Mary, Martha, and Lazarus. Jesus sat down and Mary sat at His feet, hanging on His every word. But Martha was busy around the house getting everything ready and serving everyone. There was nothing wrong with preparing the meal; that is biblical hospitality. She simply felt she needed help from her sister, who was doing nothing but sitting at Jesus' feet. She became frustrated and asked Jesus to tell Mary to help her with the serving. Jesus responded by explaining that Mary was doing what she ought to be doing. Mary had a single-minded devotion to the Lord. She was not concerned with the place settings, although those things have their place. It is not wrong to be hospitable, but Martha's preoccupation did cause, in this case, a divided devotion to Christ.

2. The positive example of Rachel Saint

When I was in Quito, Ecuador, I had the wonderful privilege of meeting with Rachel Saint, a single woman who has given her life to discipling the Auca Indians. She is an incredible person. I often think that unmarried people are possibly the most fulfilled people of all because they don't need someone else to make them complete. By the sovereign gift and grace of God, she and many like her are completely devoted to the Lord, without encumbrance.

V. THE PROMISES OF FATHERS (vv. 36-38)

"But if any man think that he behaveth himself unseemly toward his virgin, if she pass the flower of her age, and need so require, let him do what he will, he sinneth not; let them marry. Nevertheless, he that standeth steadfast in his heart, having no necessity, but hath power over his own will, and hath so decreed in his heart that he will keep his virgin, doeth well. So, then, he that giveth her in marriage doeth well; but he giveth her not in marriage doeth better."

A. Old Testament Culture

In Jewish culture, parents, and particularly fathers, long had a dominant role in deciding whom their children would marry.

1. The guardian

In the Old Testament, marriages were arranged by the parents.

a) Genesis 24:1-4--Abraham to get a wife for Isaac: "Abraham was old, and well stricken in age: and the Lord had blessed Abraham in all things. And Abraham said unto his eldest servant of his house, that ruled over all that he had, Put, I pray thee, thy hand under my thigh; and I will make thee swear by the Lord, the God of heaven, and the God of the earth, that thou shalt not take a wife unto my son of the daughters of the Canaanites, among whom I dwell. But thou shalt go unto my country, and to my kindred, and take a wife unto my son Isaac." b) Genesis 21:21--Hagar selected a wife for Ishmael: "[Ishmael] dwelt in the wilderness of Paran: and his mother took him a wife out of the land of Egypt." c) Genesis 38:6--Judah selected a wife for Er: "Judah took a wife for Er, his first-born, whose name was Tamar."

2. The government

There are even instances in the Bible where a king or a priest selected a wife for someone.

a) Genesis 41:45--"Pharaoh called Joseph's name Zaphenathpaneah; and he gave him as his wife Asenath, the daughter of Potiphera, priest of On." b) 1 Kings 11:19--Another Pharaoh gave a wife to Hadad the Edomite: "Hadad found great favor in the sight of Pharaoh, so that he gave him in marriage the sister of his own wife, the sister of Tahpenes, the queen." c) 2 Chronicles 24:3--Jehoiada, the high priest, gave two wives to the boy king Joash: "Jehoiada took for him two wives, and he begot sons and daughters."

B. New Testament Culture

Things were much different in New Testament times. Marriage, especially for young people, remained the norm. Paul writes words of instructions to the fathers of these children in verses 36-38, since it was very important for them to hear the Holy Spirit's guidelines concerning singleness and marriage. This portion of Scripture, however, is not just a cultural admonition. It contains practical guidelines that speak authoritatively to our day as well.

1. Marriage brokers

History records that around the year 500 [SC] B.C., marriage brokers (Heb. Shadcan) began appearing. These brokers were available (much like in the film *Fiddler on the Roof*) for consultation on the marriage of your children. You would give him or her a list of qualifications and he would match your child with a mate.

2. Marriage breakers

The same general custom that prevailed in many ancient societies, such as was seen in the Old and New Testaments, prevailed in Rome also. Some historians credit Rome's decline in part to the weakening of the family caused by the loss of parental control in arranging marriages.

C. Individual Choice

Some feel that in the early history of Israel, the bride and bridegroom had no say in choosing a marriage partner. But I don't agree. The best we can tell from the Scripture, the young man did have something to say about his future wife. It wasn't just his father's dogmatic command with no chance for choice. Young men had the right to some kind of choice.

1. Proverbs 30:18-19

The writer says, "There are three things which are too wonderful for me, yea, four which I know not: The way of an eagle in the air; the way of a serpent upon a rock; the way of a ship in the midst of the sea; and the way of a man with a maid." The phrase "the way of a man with a maid" may indicate that there was at least some liberty in Hebrew society to pursue a love relationship.

2. Song of Solomon

This Old Testament book expresses the tremendous love between two people. This kind of relationship implies more than just a parental agreement. The context reveals that the will of the man was obviously involved as well as the will of the woman.

3. Genesis 24:57-58

When Abraham's servant asked Rebekah's parents if she could marry Isaac, they said, "We will call the damsel, and inquire at her mouth. And they called Rebekah, and said unto her, Wilt thou go with this man? And she said, I will go." Rebekah had been consulted and made her choice to go with the servant to Isaac.

The father would usually decide on the marriage partner, but probably not without the children's involvement in some way. There may have been times when the child's will was overruled, but for the most part, their input was considered as a part of the decision.

D. The Concern (v. 36)

1. The dedication

Paul says in verse 36, "If any man [father] think that he behaveth himself unseemly toward his virgin, if she pass the flower of her age, and need so require, let him do what he will, he sinneth not; let them marry." In light of teaching about the advantages of singleness, some of the fathers in Corinth had apparently had dedicated their young daughters to the Lord as permanent virgins. But when the daughters became of marriageable age, many of them no doubt wanted to be married, and their fathers were in a terrible position. Should they break the vow they made for their daughters? The father may have realized that his daughter, having since reached the peak of her sexual maturity, truly desired to get married. It is likely that many of the girls did not have the gift of singleness. They were struggling with their desire to get married and their desire to please their father and the Lord. This problem was surely one of the questions the Corinthians had asked Paul in their first letter (7:1).

2. The decision

Paul says, "If she pass the flower of her age," that is, when she reaches sexual maturity "and need so require, let him do what he will, he sinneth not; let them marry" (v. 36). If a father made a vow for his daughter but realized he was not being fair because now she desired to be married, Paul says, "Let him do what he will, he sinneth not. Let them marry." His was a noble aspiration, but the girl probably didn't have the gift of singleness. By implication, there must be a potential mate because the text says, "Let them marry." Paul says the father was acting unfairly because he was putting his daughter in a potentially tempting situation. Such a woman would be running into the same problem that Jephthah had when he made a vow that ultimately killed his daughter (Judg. 11:29-40). A father who had vowed that his daughter would remain single to serve the Lord more devotedly was free to change his mind and allow her to marry if she were insistent. After all, it was a vow made for someone else, and was therefore subject to that person's spiritual needs. Just as unmarried people themselves are under no restraint (v. 35) and do not commit sin by marrying (v. 28), neither does a father who has made a vow do wrong by changing his mind.

3. The discovery

Paul discusses the opposite situation in verse 37: "Nevertheless, he that standeth steadfast in his heart, having no necessity, but hath power over his own will, and hath so decreed in his heart that he will keep his virgin, doeth well." Paul is saying that if the father has not changed his mind about his promise, and is under no constraint by the daughter to change his mind, he will do well in having her remain single. If the daughter had no great strong sexual desire for marriage, it will be good for her to remain as she is. If the father has a pure motive "hath power over his own will" and is deeply committed "and hath so decreed in his heart," he may allow his daughter to remain unmarried for service and devotion to the Lord. Only the daughter's unwillingness to keep the vow should cause the father to change his mind. His steadfastness in his vow will encourage his daughter to be steadfast in hers. But if she does not have the gift for singleness, he may be doing her a bigger disservice by keeping her single. The key issue in verses 36-38 is one of advantage versus disadvantage. If the daughter is set on remaining single, she has a unique advantage in serving the Lord. But if she desires marriage, the father will do well in recognizing that and allow her to serve the Lord as a married person.

VI. THE PERMANENCY OF MARRIAGE (vv. 39-40)

"The wife is bound by the law as long as her husband liveth; but if her husband be dead, she is at liberty to be married to whom she will, only in the Lord. But she is happier if she so abide, after my judgement; and I think also that I have the Spirit of God."

This additional word about singleness is not tacked on to Paul's discussion, as some interpreters suggest. It focuses on the permanency of the marriage relationship.

A. The Focus

The focus of Paul's argument here is this: If your spouse dies and you are released from that marriage bond, you are better off if you remain single for full and complete devotion to Christ the rest of your life. "If you are deciding whether or not to marry," says Paul, "remember that marriage is lifelong." You will never be able to exercise the full potential of singleness once you marry. Because marriage is a lifelong commitment, think seriously before marrying. Although Christians with the gift of singleness are free to be married, they should keep in mind that if they marry, they are bound for the rest of their lives if they should die before their partner.

B. The Friendship

Now, please don't think I am down on marriage. I love my wife and children and would not have it any other way. Marriage is a wonderful opportunity for friendship and companionship. But those who have been specifically gifted by God for singleness need to consider the equally wonderful opportunity for unique service for Christ. If you choose to marry, you have given up the right to

remain unmarried. Paul's words ring true for this chance to be especially committed to the plan of God.

C. The Fidelity

Paul says in verse 39, "If her husband be dead, she is at liberty to be married to whom she will, only in the Lord" (cf. 1 Cor. 9:5; Rom. 7:2). Death severs a marriage. The advice here is to widows and widowers. Widowed believers are not bound to stay single, but if they remarry, it must be to another believer. There is no such thing as missionary dating. Christians are not to date or marry unbelievers. Deuteronomy 7:1-4 indicates that believers are to marry only to those in the family of God (cf. 2 Cor. 6:14).

D. The Future

Paul takes one more opportunity to state his conviction on singleness: "[The widow] is happier if she so abide [in singleness], after my judgement." Paul again reiterates that remarriage is not the ideal; it is not God's best for everyone. He is not giving a command, but is giving counsel for the benefit of those who take it. A woman who has God's grace for singleness will be happier if she remains single.

CONCLUSION

Paul ends the chapter by using a touch of sarcasm. He says, "And I think also that I have the Spirit of God." Paul was responding to those who were saying only they had the Spirit of God and were able to make right pronouncements. That statement doesn't serve to lessen Paul's point but to strengthen it. Both the Jewish and Gentile leaders were advocating philosophies that were contrary to sound doctrine--one advocating marriage only and the other advocating celibacy only. Paul was not merely giving opinion, but divine revelation from the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. He was still speaking as "an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God" (1 Cor. 1:1, NASB). His conviction and his advice on singleness and marriage--and all other matters--was that of the Lord Himself.

Focusing on the Facts

1. Discuss what the Bible teaches concerning the design of marriage.
2. How has the church tended to regard those who remained single?
3. Single people are just as qualified for _____ as those who are married.
4. Describe two different philosophies concerning marriage that were circulating around Corinth.
5. The issue is not a person's marital status but his _____.
6. True or false: Marriage is only a part of this world and will not occupy a place in heaven.
7. Describe what is meant by the preoccupations of marriage.
8. True or false: The gift of singleness is the only spiritual gift that you have the option to use. Explain your answer.
9. Describe what is meant by this phrase: "That she may be holy both in body and in spirit" (v. 34).
10. What two motives did Paul have in mind in advising the Corinthians to remain single?
11. What is the main point of the illustration from Mary and Martha in Luke 10?
12. Describe what is meant by the fifth reason for remaining single, "The Promises of Fathers".
13. What was the cultural norm for marriage selections in the Old and New Testaments?
14. True or false: First Corinthians 7:36-38 is simply an historical account and is not applicable for fathers today.
15. Explain the options a father regarding the marital status of his daughter.
16. What one reason should lead a father to change his mind regarding his daughter's singleness?
17. What are the main points Paul wanted to convey in verses 39-40?
18. Why did Paul use sarcasm in verse 40?

Pondering the Principles

1. The Lord Jesus Christ wants His children to have His undivided attention. One potential problem is the preoccupations of marriage. According to the apostle Paul in verses 32-35, it is a fact that those who are married will be preoccupied with each other. On that basis, Paul's conviction was that those who had the choice for singleness should exercise that option. Are you single? If so, you should consider Paul's advice to remain that way. If you are single and feel as though you do not have God's gift for singleness, you do not need to feel you are bound to remain unmarried. Thank God for your present situation, whatever it may be, and trust Him for your marital future.
2. In Jewish culture, parents long had a dominant role in deciding whom their children would marry. Although in Western society most young couples have freedom of choice concerning their partner, godly parents can have a tremendous influence on their children by their example and wisdom. If you have a son or daughter that will be making that decision soon, help your child to make the best decision he could possibly make. If he feels free of any sexual desire, he may have been gifted with God's grace for singleness. If so, encourage him to be all that God has intended for him as a single servant of the Lord.
3. Paul reiterates in verses 39-40 that a marriage relationship is lifelong. It is not to be entered into lightly. On that basis, those making that decision should evaluate the commitment required. It may be that singleness is the option for you. If you have been married in the past and your spouse has died, you are free to remarry. Realize however, that your singleness affords an unlimited potential for service to Christ. Consider Paul's advice about your future very carefully. Ask God whether he would have you remain single for the sake of bringing others to the Savior who might not come otherwise. If it be so, thank God continually for his giving you the gift of singleness. Use it for His glory.

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