

The background is a rustic, weathered wooden surface with vertical planks. In the center, there is a large, smooth, reddish-brown wooden heart. To the right of the heart, a portion of a cross is visible, made of a coarse, tan-colored burlap fabric.

# **Undistracted Devotion**

*A Single's Guide to Glorifying God*

*James Thomas*



***About the Author***

James is 25 years old and lives in Murrieta, California. James serves in the Junior High and Setup/Teardown ministries at Faith Bible Church. James is a member of FBC and has attended FBC for 19 years. James has a passion for teaching God's Word and James is joyful to partner with others in ministry for His glory. James desires to follow Scripture's clear direction in all things, and serve Christ in a manner that is above reproach before men and deserving of "Well done, good and faithful servant" before God.

*To my father and mother, Kevin and Darci, for their years of faithful discipleship and training to love the Lord. I am so incredibly thankful to have you as my parents, and I strive to follow the example you have set me. Thank you for your constant encouragement and exhortation to pursue Christ.*

*To my incredible editor Michelle, who offered tremendous help throughout this process, and reviewers Meghan and Brandi, who gave insight into biblical singleness as women. This book would not have been completed without your help!*

*To all the men in the Training Center program: you have encouraged and exhorted me through these past three years and truly been “iron sharpening iron”. To the Training Center program leaders, Chris, John, and Nigel; you have helped show me far more of God and His design for me, and I am so thankful for your mentorship.*

*Undistracted Devotion*

Introduction	5
Chapter 1: Developing a Love for the Lord	8
Chapter 2: God's Role in Singleness	17
Chapter 3: Your Role in Singleness	21
Chapter 4: Developing a Biblical View of the Opposite Sex	32
Chapter 5: Social Media and Singleness	44
Chapter 6: Personal Worship	50
Chapter 7: Personal Discipline	57
Chapter 8: Career and Finance	62
Closing Exhortation	71
References	74
Additional Materials	77



# Introduction

## **Who I Am**

I am a single who tries and fails to glorify God. I still regularly struggle with discontentment over my singleness and have keenly felt and still feel the desire for a spouse. I have been single for nearly my whole life, despite having the desire for a relationship. God continues to show me grace and mercy in my singleness as I learn to love Him more and glorify Him in my singleness. I am not writing this as someone who has figured this out, but am seeking to live these things out myself. I am writing this to myself more than anyone else, as I realize I need this exhortation to glorify Christ!

## **Why This Subject**

In the world, singleness is considered a fun benefit. Singleness offers “freedom to find sexual fulfillment without any of the commitments of marriage.”<sup>1</sup> But Christian singleness is quite different in that Christians are called to abstain from any form of sexual sin, including sex, pornography, and masturbation. Some people are seeking to undermine this truth and argue that we don’t need to abstain from sexual sin, with Bromleigh McCleneghan saying, “We can be like Jesus. Maybe celibate, maybe not. It’s really no one’s business but ours and God’s.”<sup>2</sup> This promotes the idea that celibacy is optional during singleness. The biblical concept of singleness is being attacked from inside and outside the Church. And when celibacy is accurately preached Christian singleness is described as difficult. Many books and resources on this assume it is undesirable or some trial to overcome or grit your teeth through. Sam Allberry notes that:

*Singleness is assumed to be pretty much awful...to see if we might eke out something just tolerable about it. It is almost always defined in the negative, in the absence of something. It’s the state of not being married. It is the absence of a significant other. This defining by negation reinforces*

---

<sup>1</sup> Allberry, Sam. *7 Myths about Singleness*. Page 12.

<sup>2</sup> McCleneghan, Bromleigh. 2016. *Sex and the Single Christian: Why Celibacy isn’t the Only Option*. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/acts-of-faith/wp/2016/08/22/sex-and-the-single-christian-why-celibacy-isnt-the-only-option/> (accessed February 2021).

*the idea that there is nothing intrinsically good about singleness; it is merely the situation of lacking what is intrinsically good in marriage.<sup>3</sup>*

But Christ describes singleness as a good and commendable thing. Singles need to be shown that singleness is far from a second-class state of the Christian, but rather a gift from God that enables Christians to serve Him in unique and valuable ways. Single Christians need a higher view of singleness.

You have likely been asked by every close friend, “Are you dating anyone? Do you want to date anyone? Do you want to get married? When are you going to get married?” These questions force a Christian single to think through the theology of singleness far more than a married person likely has. This book will hopefully help you to see the amazing gift of singleness and how to use it best for Christ’s glory.

Singles also need to consider their purpose (more on this in Chapter 1). There are millions of young and old Christian singles who are wasting their unique time as a single by pursuing worldly passions, idolizing a relationship, or just being apathetic toward their walk with Christ. Spiritual boys and girls expect to be married, despite having never learned to adore God and serve Him in their singleness. If you want to glorify God, learn to do it well while you are single. Don’t wait for marriage! As this book will discuss, singleness presents unique opportunities and advantages to serving Christ and His church.

Every person is single at some point in his or her life, so understanding biblical singleness is important for every believer. There are four forms of singleness:

- Never married
- Divorced
- Separated
- Widowed

All of these people face the same call to pursue undistracted devotion to the Lord, which we will look at in Chapter 1. And married believers need to know how to properly encourage and exhort single Christians, rather than just tell them that they will “find someone” one day. Singles face pressure from parents, friends, and themselves to find a partner. There is an unspoken understanding that everyone will be married, but God’s Word does not promise this (more on that in Chapter 2).

### **What Is the Goal?**

The goal of this book is to show that God’s design for single believers is to glorify Him and use this time well. This is written for single believers of all ages, but particularly high-

---

<sup>3</sup> Allberry, Sam. *7 Myths about Singleness*. Page 13.

school to young-adult as that is the demographic to whom I can best relate. Older single Christians may have different challenges or opportunities, and as a young single, I cannot speak to those areas as well. Similarly, while many of the same principles will apply to single women, there are other unique considerations for being a single woman that I, as a single man, do not have experience in and cannot write on. I have endeavored to present as much aid as possible to single women in this book but would highly recommend consulting the materials discussed in *Additional Resources*. You may be a single who struggles with discontentment and a constant longing to be married. You may have questioned God's sovereignty and felt confused about why you do not have a spouse. If that is you, I hope this book can help to show you God's good plan for your life and aid you in worshiping Him in your singleness with contentment. Or maybe you feel called to lifelong singleness. You are happy to be single and see this as a great blessing to serve Christ and His church. If that is you, then first, thank you! The church desperately needs content and called singles. I hope this book can encourage you to excel still more! You may even be dating or married, and want to better encourage and minister to your single brothers and sisters in Christ. No matter what your relationship status or feelings about it, I hope that this book will help to show you God's purpose for Christian singles and how they can be used uniquely by Him. It's exciting!



# Chapter 1      Developing a Love for the Lord

*“I want you to be free from anxieties. The unmarried man is anxious about the things of the Lord, how to please the Lord. But the married man is anxious about worldly things, how to please his wife, and his interests are divided. And the unmarried or betrothed woman is anxious about the things of the Lord, how to be holy in body and spirit. But the married woman is anxious about worldly things, how to please her husband. I say this for your own benefit, not to lay any restraint upon you, but to promote good order and to secure your undivided devotion to the Lord” (1 Corinthians 7:32-35).<sup>4</sup>*

Our purpose as single Christians is to pursue undistracted devotion to the Lord. Marriage is a great gift, but it does result in a married person having less time, energy, and money to serve the Lord (more on that in later chapters). “Undistracted devotion” means complete joy and satisfaction in Christ alone. God consistently emphasizes the importance of loving God, and Paul identifies this one mindset as the greatest call of the single believer. “Only let each person lead the life that the Lord has assigned to him, and to which God has called him” (1 Corinthians 7:17). Paul says that God assigns singleness and marriage to each individual. Your relational status as a single person is a job given to you by God. And as Paul describes further down in verse 35, Paul writes this to secure our “undistracted devotion” to the Lord. God assigns singleness (1 Corinthians 7:17), and this comes with a job description (1 Corinthians 7:35). You can even imagine having a badge at work with the following:

Name	(insert your name)
Job	Single
Description	Undistracted devotion to the Lord

Describing singleness as a job may seem task-oriented, but too many singles fail to pursue their “job description” of undistracted devotion to the Lord. We need to remind

---

<sup>4</sup> All verse citations use the English Standard Version (ESV), unless otherwise noted.

ourselves that singleness is a gift from God, and that gift should be used as intended. How does God intend us to use our singleness? Paul answers that in 1 Corinthians 7:35, “*to secure your undistracted devotion to the Lord*”. It is important to remember that undistracted devotion to God isn’t just a benefit of singleness, but our calling and purpose.

Furthermore, Paul says that he judges it is good to remain single (1 Corinthians 7:25-26). Your “job” may change in the future, but while you are single, do the work of singleness. Love God with all your heart. And this job isn’t a job that God assigns as a punishment. God assigns singleness as a gift; it is a good thing that He is giving to single Christians. “*But each has his own gift from God*” (1 Corinthians 7:6). It can be difficult to see singleness as a gift, especially a gift God gives for our good (Romans 8:28). He knows that singleness is a good gift and the best possible state for you right now. Sometimes, this feels like a Christmas when your aunt or uncle gifts you something you don’t really want, but of course, you pretend to be happy for it when in front of them. The sort of awkward “YAY, wow, thank you”, while thinking to yourself “What in the world am I going to do with *this*?” Speaking as a single Christian, contentment with this gift can be a huge struggle. Thoughts of “Lord, *why* did you give me this? I don’t want to be single; I think my life would be better if I weren’t single”. We need to anchor ourselves in God’s truth when Satan tempts us to think that life would be better if we weren’t single:

*For my thoughts are not your thoughts,  
neither are your ways my ways, declares the Lord.*

*For as the heavens are higher than the earth,  
so are my ways higher than your ways  
and my thoughts than your thoughts.*

*(Isaiah 55:8-9)*

We need to remember that God knows perfectly what the best course for our lives is, and we often don’t. This includes God giving us singleness, as Paul shows in 1 Corinthians 7. God may give you singleness for a time or it may be permanent. You may be married and then be single following divorce or death of a spouse. All of these things are according to God’s plan for our good. But how is singleness good? Paul discusses how singleness is good in the remainder of 1 Corinthians 7.

Paul describes in 1 Corinthians 7:32-34 how marriage requires a person to devote a substantial amount of time and energy toward their spouse. The greatest benefit of being single is that we can pursue the love of God without needing to give our time to a spouse.

It is an advantage over married believers. Married believers can be distracted by their spouses: how to care for them, love them, spend time with them. And then kids come along, and now the married believer must spend time with their spouse, parent their children, be attentive toward schooling and sports and friendships, and all other sorts of things while still maintaining a healthy marriage. This takes a huge amount of time, effort, and intentionality. Now Paul is not saying that married believers love God less, only that they have other relationships which can distract from loving God. Single Christians do not have a covenantal relationship to maintain like a married Christian does, and Paul says this presents them the unique opportunity to love God without distraction. Sadly, many single Christians are unaware of this call or fail to pursue it.

Why is loving God important, and how can we best cultivate a love for God while single? George Mueller discovered the importance of loving God and noted:

The point is this: I saw more clearly than ever that the first great and primary business to which I ought to attend every day was to have my soul happy in the Lord. The first thing to be concerned about was not how much I might serve the Lord, how I might glorify the Lord; but how I might get my soul into a happy state, and how my inner man might be nourished.<sup>5</sup>

A true delight in the Lord better drives us to serve Him, it fulfills us, it demonstrates obedience to Him, and it results in reward!

### **God Commands Our Love**

We will be undistracted with our devotion for God if we don't love Him. If we love other things as much as or more than God, those competing affections will constantly vie for our attention and pull us from our calling of undistracted devotion.

When asked by the Pharisees what the greatest commandment was, Christ replied it was to “*love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment*” (Matthew 22:37-38). God doesn't request to be loved; He commands to be loved. He alone has the authority and the right as our Creator to command this. Out of all the commandments God has given His people, the greatest is to love Him with all their heart. The Westminster Catechism begins with “What is the chief end of man? To glorify God, and to enjoy Him forever”. John Piper remarks that this

---

<sup>5</sup> Whitfield. George. 2017. *The First Great and Primary Business*.  
<https://www.georgemuller.org/devotional/the-first-great-and-primary-business> (accessed January 2021).

should be rephrased to “To glorify God *by* enjoying Him forever”.<sup>6</sup> We are commanded to love God, and in loving Him, we obey and glorify Him.

### **God Loves Us**

“*We love because he first loved us*” (1 John 4:19). God initiated the love relationship. God pursued us and continues to love us even when we fail to love Him. God is the perfect standard of faithful love. God loved us while we were sinners and died for us while we were sinners. “*But God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us*” (Romans 5:19). One of the greatest ways to repel lovelessness is to dwell on Christ’s depth of love at the cross. Do you dwell on the cross? Specifically, do you often reflect on God’s love demonstrated on the cross? If you do not habitually reflect on Christ’s love on the cross, you cannot be surprised when you fail to love Him above everything else. No one has ever loved you to that extent and no one ever will! Therefore, be intentional about reflecting on His love for you. If you fantasize about being loved and cherished by someone, remember that God’s thoughts toward you are greater than the sand on the seashore (Psalm 139:17-18). Whatever something else offers that pulls you from God, remember that God loved you first and God loves you greatest. No one will ever love you more than God, not even a future spouse! Think on His love and let it drive you to love Him more.

### **God Is Worthy of Our Love**

God is the only One worthy of our total and complete love. We strive to love Him with all our heart because He alone deserves it. The apostle John in Revelation continually describes heaven as a scene of eternal praise to God because He is worthy.

*Worthy are you, our Lord and God,  
to receive glory and honor and power,  
for you created all things,  
and by your will they existed and were created. (Revelation 4:11)*

Revelation is filled with praise to God and extolls Him for being worthy of our praise. He is worthy because he is our Creator (Revelation 4:11) and our Savior and redeemer (Revelation 5:9-10). Do you read God’s Word to see that He is worthy? If you struggle to see God as worthy, read the praises of God in His Word that describe why He is worthy. If you find that it can be difficult to be amazed by God’s worthiness, it may be because you aren’t dwelling on His worthiness enough. And His worthiness is displayed nowhere

---

<sup>6</sup> Piper, John. 2001. *The Dangerous Duty of Delight*. Colorado Springs, Colorado. Page 14-15.

more clearly than His Word. Read the Psalms, read the Gospel accounts of how Christ suffered and died in our place, and read Revelation to see the picture of millions of angels and believers praising Him endlessly!

### **Believers Are Defined by Love**

The Apostle John writes that love is a defining characteristic of Christians. *“Whoever loves has been born of God and knows God. Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love”* (1 John 4:7-8). We ought to pursue loving God because love describes a Christian. Imagine a mechanic who doesn’t like cars, a doctor who doesn’t like helping people, or a builder who doesn’t like working with his hands. It just doesn’t make sense. That’s a Christian who does not love God. It defies expectations and means they probably aren’t good at their job. Our job as singles is to pursue undistracted devotion to the Lord, and how can we be devoted to Him if we do not love Him? We should earnestly pursue loving God because it is a necessary part of being a Christian. Single Christians must strive to be known for their love of God and others. Do you have a reputation for being loving?

### **God Rewards Our Love**

I ran track in high school, and one of the rules in sprinting is that you must stay in your lane. Track runners run hard, but they always keep their eyes fixed ahead and run within their lanes. Similarly, a Christian’s effort in ministry is worthless if it is not done in love. These “good works” are in fact annoying to God if love is absent. 1 Corinthians 13:1-3 says,

*If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. If I give away all I have, and if I deliver up my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing.*

So, as singles, the terrifying prospect for us is that we could spend our singleness (which could be our entire lives on earth) working our fingers down to the bone in ministry, giving of our time and money, evangelizing, going on missions trips, and a myriad of other admirable and Christian things, but without an undistracted devotion to God all these works could be burned up. Just as a track runner who runs hard but strays into the other lane and receives no prize, believers can work hard and receive no reward if their works are not done with love. This is the possible reality that should drive a believer to ensure they are serving in a way that is truly fixed on Jesus Christ. Do not serve to fuel pride, satisfy man, go through the motions, or serve in your own strength. All of those

motivations and mindsets can cause good works to be burned up and not glorify God. This should cause us to strive to be sure we are truly glorifying God. The way to do that is to pursue a life that is filled with undistracted devotion to the Lord. That is the foundation for anything in this book. This book will discuss many great ways to glorify God, but you can read this and have a wrong motivation. You can be fixed on your glory and reputation instead of God's, or on your purposes instead of God's. If that is how you approach this, then doing these things will ultimately just result in a lifetime of being a "spiritual workaholic" and it will all be burned up in the end (1 Corinthians 3:12-15).

As singles, it can be tempting to think, "If I get my life in order and pursue God and am disciplined, God will reward me with a partner." But how can we say we truly love God if we only serve Him to get a partner? Serving God to get a partner is idolatry, as you are really serving the idol of wanting a relationship. Undistracted devotion means complete satisfaction and joy in Christ. But this satisfaction and joy in Christ is for Christ's glory, not to earn a relationship. God doesn't give out relationships to award someone for being spiritual or serving Him. We do those things for His glory and the edification of His church, not for our personal gain.

Being spiritual to gain a partner or respect from others will result in a life wasted and all the "good" being burned up. This is not saying the person is necessarily unsaved (though lack of love for the Lord should be examined carefully). Anthony Hoekema describes it in this way:

The failures and shortcomings of . . . believers . . . will enter into the picture on the Day of Judgment. But—and this is the important point—the sins and shortcomings of believers will be revealed in the judgment as forgiven sins, whose guilt has been totally covered by the blood of Jesus Christ.<sup>7</sup>

A believer can be obedient and do the right things, but if the believer's heart is not right, then ultimately the good works get burned up and they receive no reward for this. Thinking of my own life, it saddens me to think of mission trips, sermons I have preached, service, and discipleship which could be burned up. Believers who do things without love could be left with a small remnant of their life that actually glorifies God, while the rest sits on a trash pile filled with works done with wrong motives.

You should be attentive and vigilant toward your heart in things. Is it motivated by love? Are you doing these out of a love for Christ and His church? For singles, there can be a strong pull toward relationship idolatry—joining a ministry only for the cute girl and leaving

---

<sup>7</sup> Piper, John. 2012. *How Believers Will be Judged*. <https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/how-believers-will-be-judged> (accessed October 2020).

when it doesn't work out. Don't let your ministry commitments or church attendance be dependent on the opposite sex. That is serving for self; it reaps no eternal rewards and is bound to leave you feeling that ministry isn't fulfilling. 1 Corinthians 13:1-3 says if you do all these things without love you are a noisy gong. Don't let your life as a single be a noisy gong to the Lord. Earnestly pursue a true love for God!

Undistracted devotion to the Lord is the unique call of the single Christian. So how do we develop a love for the Lord? Below are seven ways to develop a love for the Lord.

#### **Meditate on His Goodness**

*“Open my eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of your law”  
(Psalm 119:18).*

When you read God's Word, first spend time dwelling on Him and His goodness to you. Too often we impatiently, quickly read His Word without prayerful meditation and expect to be enriched. We approach God, whose mercies are new every day, with a skim reading. Slow down, be intentional. Taste and see that the Lord is good (Psalm 34:8)! Meditate on His goodness and ask that He reveal Himself to you.

#### **Pray for Love**

*“Search me, O God, and know my heart! Try me and know my thoughts”  
(Psalm 139:23).*

Pray to God fervently that He would show you any competing affections. Being single can be difficult. There are so many things that we can be tempted to give our love and attention toward. Be intentional to pray to God that He would reveal to you any idols which are fighting for your love. Your love belongs to God, and no creation or hobby should ever unseat Him from His throne on your heart. However, sin and our hearts can be deceitful (Jeremiah 17:9), so we must diligently pray that God reveal anything that is competing for our love.

#### **Surround Yourself with People who Love God**

*“Iron sharpens iron, and one man sharpens another” (Proverbs 27:17).*

Scripture continually shows the importance of choosing friends because of the impact they can have on our lives. Single Christians need to consider their close friends. Can you describe them as loving God? Do they drive you to love Him more? Do not underestimate how friendships can influence your affections. Remember Solomon, who in his early years prayed to God for wisdom and seemed to have a heart that loved God and was steadfast? After marrying women from foreign countries, his affections were turned. His many foreign wives encouraged him toward idols over years and years. It was



not a fast fall, but a slow warping of Solomon's affections. Consider your friendships carefully.

### **Study Him**

*"Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways" (Romans 11:33).*

See how Paul praises God! And why? Because Paul knows God. Study the majesty and wonder of God, what He has done in creation, in the church, in your life, His redemptive plan, His sovereignty over Israel and preserving them! John Musyimi, speaking of the importance of studying God, said: "Simply put, in order to heighten our worship, we must deepen our theology."<sup>8</sup> Do you spend time learning about God?

### **Study Other Christians**

*"Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. For by it the people of old received their commendation" (Hebrews 11:1-2).*

Biographies are a great tool to allow us to study those who truly adored God and lived their love for God throughout their lives. Many Christians sadly undervalue this today, though we apply this to other areas in life. People who want to learn investing read about professional investors and want to follow their same steps and strategies in order to glean knowledge. People who are passionate about a sport study the greatest in their sport and seek to imitate their habits, their training, their diet, their schedule, etc. But when it comes to loving God, why do so many Christians never study those who went before them?

The writer of Hebrews famously walks through Old Testament people of faith and describes how faith leads to action. Similarly, studying biographies of faithful believers can show us how love of God leads to action. Have you ever heard a sermon where the preacher gave a short summary of an incredible life lived by a person such as George Mueller, Jonathan Edwards, or Martin Lloyd Jones and described how he had been impacted by their example? Imagine reading more than just the soundbite and diving into how their love of God drove their entire life! Below are some great biographies if you are unsure where to start:

- *Here I Stand: A Life of Martin Luther* by Roland Bainton
- *Bonhoeffer: Pastor, Martyr, Prophet, Spy* by Eric Metaxas

---

<sup>8</sup> Musyimi, John. 2020. *5 Ways to Love God with All your Mind*. <https://africa.thegospelcoalition.org/article/love-god-with-all-your-mind/> (accessed December 2020).

- *The Forgotten Spurgeon* by Iain H. Murray
- *George Muller of Bristol: His Life of Prayer and Faith* by A. T. Pierson
- *The Swan is not Silent* series by John Piper
- *Confessions* by St. Augustine

**Be Discipled by Someone Who Loves God**

*“Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ” (1 Corinthians 11:1).*

To combat competing affections, be discipled by someone who loves God more than anything. Find the person who has the reputation of adoring God above all else and be discipled by them. But in this discipleship, make sure it is intentional, focused, and honest. Ask for accountability on your affections. Do not let discipleship be solely focused on your lusts, money, and time in the Word and prayer. Let discipleship go into your spiritual love life. Discipleship by someone who adores God, and that includes questions, accountability, and study on the love of God, is a means of grace given by God to grow your affection. Take advantage of it!

**Remember, Repent, and Do**

*“But I have this against you, that you have abandoned the love you had at first. Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent, and do the works you did at first” (Revelation 2:4-5).*

The Ephesian church is accused of leaving their first love, and God commands them to do three things: remember, repent, and do the works they did at first. Remember your love for God and God’s love for you! Remember the days where you felt full and satisfied in Him! Remember the joy of being devoted to Him, secure in the knowledge that you loved and were loved by Him. And repent. Repent of your failure to love God above all else. He alone is worthy. We need to realize that failure to love God above all else is sin. It isn’t just misplacing our affection; it is a sin that Jesus Christ paid for on the cross and requires our repentance. Finally, we must do the works we did at first. This may seem like saying that the way to love God is to do things. Can a husband say he loves his wife when he never takes her on dates, never brings her flowers, serves her, or surprises her? Just as love within a marriage is expressed and maintained through action, loving God is expressed and maintained through action. Love is action, and we must actively love God.

## Chapter 2 God's Role in Singleness

There is a common misconception that marriage is for everyone. Everyone at church will say to you, "You'll find someone!" as if we need to find someone or that it is guaranteed. Marriage is assumed in today's church culture. While the secular society continues to devalue marriage, most believers look at their single friends thinking that the question is not if, but when, they will find a spouse. Assuming you will be married makes it difficult to be content as a single. After all, how can you be content with singleness when everyone, including yourself, is looking forward to you no longer being single?

Today's common assumption is simply not what the Bible describes for singles. God doesn't promise a spouse, He promises a relationship with Him! You may not find a spouse. And if you remain single all your days, it is entirely because God has determined that you will glorify Him best without a partner. Elizabeth Elliot writes, "Singleness ought not be viewed as a problem, nor marriage as a right. God grants either as a gift".<sup>9</sup> God may choose to grant you singleness for a season to grow you to be a better spouse later, or He may choose to grant you singleness for your lifetime to uniquely serve Him. He may grant you marriage soon, or it may take years. But no matter your relationship status, it is a gift from God, and God gives perfect gifts (James 1:17).

It is important to have the underlying thought that, whether you get married or not, marriage is temporary. Christ, speaking of marriage in heaven, said "*For in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven*" (Matthew 22:30). John Piper spoke of the urge for singles to fixate on marriage, saying,

Do not elevate natural processes like procreation and childbearing and marriage to anything bigger than what they are: temporal, physical, means of keeping the world going and illustrations of Christ and His church which when He comes, fade away.<sup>10</sup>

Now this isn't to say marriage isn't great (I'm told it is!). The Bible consistently exalts marriage as God's perfect design and something that glorifies Him. But singles need to fight the urge to fixate on marriage. Biblical contentment and waiting on the Lord in

---

<sup>9</sup> Elliot, Elizabeth. 2002. *Quest for Love: True Stories of Passion and Purity*. F.H. Revell.

<sup>10</sup> Piper, John. Sermon, recorded April 30, 2014. *Single in Christ A Name Better Than Sons & Daughters*. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GLJj\\_FVR9Mg](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GLJj_FVR9Mg) (accessed January 2021).

singleness is rooted in the understanding that marriage is not the ultimate end. All Christians know there is far better waiting for us with Christ.

Contentment begins with trusting in God. *“But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you” (Matthew 6:33)*. A Christian’s priority is always to have their eyes on Christ first. Single Christians can be tempted toward seeking relationships, or seeking money or status to get a relationship, but Christ’s command is clear: seek the Lord first. Christ doesn’t simply command us to follow Him, but adds a comfort and promise to those who obey Him: *“all these things will be added to you”*. We cannot be serving just to earn a spouse. That is still serving for the wrong reason. God does not promise a spouse. We can trust in God and have a desire for a spouse while seeking Him faithfully.

What does seeking the Lord mean? It means exactly what 1 Corinthians 7:35 says: *“undistracted devotion to the Lord”*. Seek to glorify God with your love, your time, your money, your service, and every other part of your life. Singles have the ability to do this in a uniquely undistracted manner. Chapters 5 and 6 will look at these topics in more detail.

Unfortunately, many Christian singles today live uncommitted lives. They aren’t sure if they will be single or married, but they don’t commit to opportunities and don’t serve God wholeheartedly because they want to be ready to drop things in an instant for marriage. Peter Valk, writing on this lack of commitment, says, “Even in temporary singleness, Christians can delete their dating apps, set down their phones, and intentionally use their availability to serve their neighbors.”<sup>11</sup> If you are single, trust in God’s providence and serve Him wholeheartedly in your singleness. This may be temporary, or you may be called to lifetime singleness, but don’t waste years meandering in your Christian walk. Redeem this time well and devote yourself to Christ and His church.

In Christ’s teaching on divorce, we also learn something about singleness:

*The disciples said to him, “If such is the case of a man with his wife, it is better not to marry.” But he said to them, “Not everyone can receive this saying, but only those to whom it is given. For there are eunuchs who have been so from birth, and there are eunuchs who have been made eunuchs by men, and there are eunuchs who have made themselves*

---

<sup>11</sup> Valk, Peter. 2020. *The Case for Vocational Singleness*. <https://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2020/november-web-only/valk-case-for-vocational-singleness.html> (accessed February 20, 2021).

*eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of heaven. Let the one who is able to receive this receive it.” (Matthew 19:10-12)*

Christ teaches there are three types of eunuchs: people born that way, people who are caused to be that way by men, and people who choose it. The last group who choose to be single do this for a particular reason—the kingdom! As will be discussed in later chapters, singleness gives a unique advantage in service and devotion to Christ and His church, and the singles that Christ describes here intentionally remain single to serve Christ.

One particular struggle for single Christians is the urge to belong to someone. Marriage offers companionship and belonging that can be deeply alluring, but the key to contentment and waiting on the Lord is reminding ourselves that God is all we need, and He emphasizes that we belong to Him:

*For thus says the LORD: “To the eunuchs who keep my Sabbaths, who choose the things that please me and hold fast my covenant, I will give in my house and within my walls a monument and a name better than sons and daughters; I will give them an everlasting name that shall not be cut off.” (Isaiah 56:4-5)*

Christian singles often feel a strong desire to belong to someone. For singles with the burning to belong to someone; take comfort. Far better than belonging to any person, God says that singles belong to Him and have a personal inheritance that He promises to them. God makes a personal and particular promise to singles who remain faithful to Him and glorify Him in their singleness!

This may be difficult, as it isn’t as tangible as a physical relationship. Too many people try to comfort lonely singles with a simple “You belong to God!” without explaining what that means, or how to shift your thinking to that truth. Belonging to God means that, no matter what your relationship status, you have a far better relationship in Christ. You have been adopted through Christ’s sacrifice and are intimately known and loved by Him! There are three things to meditate on to grow in contentment:

### **Christ is Enough**

Christians place their satisfaction and joy in Christ, not a romantic relationship. This may sound cheap or cliché, but we are made to be satisfied in Him. We must remember that Christ lived His entire life on earth as a single and was entirely satisfied in relationship with God. Similarly, Christian singles must remember that joy is rooted in Christ alone, and thus we can be satisfied and joyful in our singleness.

We often assume that contentment is only for people who are lacking, and that by emphasizing the need for singles to be content, we are implying a deficiency they need to be content with. But even those with much can be discontent. John D. Rockefeller, a business magnate, was considered the wealthiest American of all time. At his peak his net worth in today's dollars was over \$418 billion (and was more than one percent of the entire US economy!). He was the first billionaire in the US and was the wealthiest person in the world. Yet famously, when asked how much money was enough, he answered "just a little bit more". He was not content, despite being the richest man in the country. Similarly, emphasizing the need for Christian contentment is in no way implying that singles lack anything. We have salvation through Christ, and we have His eternal promises to look forward to, including an eternity with Him in perfect glory! We lack nothing in Christ, and *that* is why we ought to be content. It is not a contentment because we *lack* anything, but because we have *everything* we need in Christ!

### **Christ Knows What Is Best**

*"No good thing does He withhold from those who walk uprightly" (Psalm 84:11).*

*"And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose" (Romans 8:28).*

Every Christian single should memorize these two verses. Christ perfectly knows what is best, and if you are single, it is because He knows this is best for you. He never withholds what is good. Thus, if you are faithfully following Christ in your singleness and remain single, it is because Christ has omnisciently determined this is the best possible position for you to be in. It may help you to think back to some situations in your life that at the time seemed to go terribly, but in retrospect, you saw it as a great thing that God used.

For example, I was in a three-year seminary program and, at the end of the first year, I was told I could not move into the second year. This meant I would stay behind while the rest of the "cohort" of men whom I had befriended and grown close to would all move on to develop their shepherding and leadership to serve Christ's Church, and I would not. At the time, this seemed to be confusing and, in my mind, not the best outcome. I was hurt, confused, a bit embarrassed, and left wondering why I was left behind. Yet that prompted me to join children's ministry and grow more in my love and devotion to Christ than I could have imagined. God perfectly knew that this was the best path for me, and looking back, this was the best possible outcome for me. And singleness can be that way too. You may be confused about why you are single and wonder how this is best for you, but reflect back on God's providence in your life and know that He is using this time for your best possible good.

Do not be suspicious of God's motives. He isn't capriciously withholding good from you. He desires what is best for you, knows perfectly what that "best" is, and causes that "best" for you (Romans 8:28). Do you trust God in this way?

### **Christ Gives Advantage to Singles**

Sometimes as Christians we can focus so much on what singleness is *not*. It's not marriage. It's not intimacy. Yet we forget that Scripture repeatedly presents singleness as a great thing because of what it *is*. Singleness is freedom to be in ministry without distraction or constraint and gives the single unique opportunities to serve Christ and His Church.

A spouse and children affect ministry and sometimes can prohibit you from some ministry. As an example, an elder from our church recently relocated to another state for work, and he said that he would love to spend a few months seriously looking at churches in the area before making a church his home church. However, because he had a wife and high school-aged daughter, he needed to pick a church much more quickly so his daughter could have a ministry to plug into. The health of the high-school ministry became a primary influence in where they ended up. There may have been another church they would have rather gone to, but didn't because the church either didn't have a high-school ministry, or had one that was not discipleship-focused. In this way, singleness would have allowed him much greater flexibility in choosing a church.

Christ gives unique advantages to singles that allow them to serve the kingdom differently than a married couple can. Some singles intentionally set themselves apart to be single for Christ all their days on earth, serving Him without distraction. The Church desperately needs these singles and needs to honor them, rather than continually hound them about when they will find a spouse! The concept of lifelong singleness for devotion to the Lord is directly rooted in Scripture. When Christ spoke of marriage and singleness, He gave a clear purpose for singles: *"There are eunuchs who have made themselves eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of heaven. Let the one who is able to receive this receive it"* (Matthew 19:12). This is a noble calling that has been largely lost in the church today. There is no shame in encouraging singles to consider if this may be their calling. Whether singleness is temporary or permanent, use these unique advantages to serve Christ and His church.

Singles are spared from many unique trials and difficulties that a married believer can face. Often as singles it can be tempting to view marriage as this perfect and final thing; something that absolves years of waiting in singleness and dating and enters you into a perfect union. But we live in a fallen world, and so marriage is difficult. If you have close married friends you know that marriage comes with arguments that can at times be



devastating, and tragically some marriages end in divorce. Life with another person in that intimate of a relationship is hard because of our sin. God had a perfect design in marriage, but now marriage has strife and hardship because it puts two sinners together! In some instances, a Christian will marry another person who claims to be a Christian at the time, and yet after years rushes headlong into sin and proves they were never a Christian. The Christian spouse is either left divorced or married to an unbeliever, but in either result, they are extremely sorrowful at this betrayal. Children are another area in which singles are spared many trials and difficulties. Children can be born with illness, renounce Christ, or pass away early in life unexpectedly. Or perhaps the married couple is unable to have children and have to wrestle with not being able to have children of their own. The apostle Paul is aware of this and writes, “*Yet those who marry will have worldly troubles, and I would spare you that*” (1 Corinthians 7:28). These troubles cause Sam Allberry to reflect, “I would choose the lows of singleness over the lows of marriage any day of the week. I think being unhappily married must be so much harder than being unhappily single”.<sup>12</sup> There isn’t an easy “escape” button for marriage. Marriage is a covenant that God holds seriously. The disciples, when they heard Christ’s teaching that divorce was only allowed for adultery, exclaimed “*If such is the case of a man with his wife, it is better not to marry*” (Matthew 19:10). You are committed to your spouse for life. Those who are unhappy in their marriage must strive to glorify God in their marriage, even if their spouse does not love them anymore.

Just as we do not have the advantages of marriage (intimate relationship with another person, showing off the unity of the Trinity, sex, children, and more), married people do not have our advantages. “Single people are *unmarried*, while we would never think of married people as *unsingle*”.<sup>13</sup> Marriage gives up the benefits and troubles of singleness for the benefits and troubles of marriage. We need to remind ourselves that singleness is emphatically not all “troubles”, but that there are in fact many wonderful benefits that God has given us! That is why Paul calls this a “gift” in 1 Corinthians 7:7). This is not a useless gift, but an amazing gift! One of my uncles is somewhat infamous for giving Christmas gifts that are...quite bad. He always puts them inside a Trader Joe’s brown paper bag with a variety of funny nicknames (one of my more memorable nicknames that has endured is “DJ Jazzy James and the Fresh Peach”, yep!). He puts strange books I have never heard of and odd knick-knacks like flashlights or a calendar, and staples the bag closed. We always laugh, smile, and thank him, but few of his gifts are ever used. This is not the picture of the gift of singleness in Scripture. Our affections are not pulled different

---

<sup>12</sup> Allberry, Sam. *7 Myths about Singleness*. Page 30.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.* Page 36.

ways like the married person. We can be undistracted in our devotion to Christ, serve, and give in such unique ways that glorify Christ!

None of the above detracts from the good blessing that God gives in marriage. It is repeatedly extolled throughout Scripture as a great thing! This is just a reminder that marriage comes with certain trials and difficulties that single Christians are spared from. Both singleness and marriage have their own difficulties and advantages. My pastor calls this the “bliss and blisters” of singleness. Sam Allberry notes the difficulties that married believers can face and notes, “The temptation for many who are single is to compare the downs of singleness with the ups of marriage”.<sup>14</sup> Discontentment over singleness often causes a person to reflect on what they do not have in marriage, and we can be tempted to only look at what good things we are missing, and The advantage for the single Christian is they are spared from these trials and difficulties.

A final advantage singles have over married believers is that singleness teaches dependence on Christ. Not that married believers cannot depend on Christ, but singleness forces you to depend on Christ alone. As one single put it,

Maybe more than any other characteristic, this one is often most painful, and yet also proves to be the most sanctifying. When faced with temptations, trials, disappointing outcomes, unmet expectations, etc., I have nowhere else to turn but to Christ. While this should be the life of every Christian, I see it as a unique blessing in singleness that I cannot turn to a husband for that support/fulfillment.<sup>15</sup>

What an incredible perspective on singleness! Married believers have an intimate partner they can share their struggles with and get comfort from when life is difficult. Yet for the single believer we only have Christ! This is an incredible advantage for single believers as we must trust in Christ alone when life’s hardest moments come. Strive to cast all your anxieties on Him, knowing He cares for you (1 Peter 5:7). Use your time as a single to develop dependence on our Savior!

---

<sup>14</sup> Ibid. Page 30.

<sup>15</sup> Barbour, Megan. 2019. *Uniqueness in Singleness*. <https://fbccollegeministry.com/blog/2018/11/16/citizens-of-heaven-in-the-world-but-not-of-the-world-matt-chandler-md48r-my5fe-t7k6c-wpazb-x66d2> (accessed April 2021).

## Chapter 3 Your Role in Singleness

God is in complete control of all things, including your relationship status. But there is also the other side of the equation: if God has determined you will be married, you need to pursue that person! Though God is responsible, you are still responsible! How does a believer trust in God's sovereignty while still being responsible to pursue a relationship with a person? Don't hide from relationships under the guise of trusting in God's sovereignty. Too many single men never ask a girl out because they are waiting for God to make clear "she's the one". Men: God doesn't flash a neon sign over a girl. You still need to take the risk and ask her. Women, you need to be responsible in how you relate to

But far more than just being responsible to ask her out, or to say yes, you need to be responsible in your spiritual and personal disciplines to use this time well. We will explore these more in Chapters 6 through 7, but this is best summed up with an exhortation from Tim Challies: "Give the Lord a lot to work with".<sup>16</sup> Grow to be more Christlike; devour God's Word; serve till you're exhausted, then serve some more. Use this time to be a useful tool for God! If you feel called to lifelong singleness and do not desire a spouse, that is great! You can still seek to model the qualities below, as they apply whether you want to be in a relationship or not. You can also use this to provide guidance to other singles who do want to be in a relationship, even if you do not.

In taking responsibility for pursuing a relationship we need to keep in mind that the purpose of a relationship is marriage. Marry well; it affects every area of your life. A complacent spouse can act as a weight that pulls you back from ministry. Rather than encouraging you to serve and love Christ with all your heart, they can encourage you to become complacent about Christ. Don't pursue someone who doesn't demonstrate a commitment to Christ. Look for someone who's already involved in ministry and pursuing Christ. This all assumes you want to run hard and pursue the Lord and ministry. If you don't want to run hard for Christ, and you don't have a heart that wants to serve Him, there are far bigger issues. Ask yourself: what am I looking for in a person? Is a love for Christ and His church non-negotiable on that list? We are going to look at biblical

---

<sup>16</sup> Challies, Tim. 2018. *Young Christian: Give the Lord a Lot to Work With*. Available at: <https://www.challies.com/articles/give-the-lord-a-lot-to-work-with/> (accessed April 2021).

standards men and women should have when looking for a relationship.<sup>17</sup> These biblical standards can give you a better idea of who to pursue.

### **For Men**

Men can be tempted to ask a girl out based solely on her looks or to settle for any woman who will say yes, regardless of her spiritual walk. And if a man has ideas for what type of woman, he may only have vague notions (“I want a Proverbs 21 woman, or is it Proverbs 31?”). This is a vital area to get biblical counsel on to ensure that you don’t have blind spots (are you ignoring some blatant red flag because she is cute?). Men should have biblical standards for what woman they would consider for a relationship.

#### **She Loves God**

*“Charm is deceitful, and beauty is vain,  
but a woman who fears the Lord is to be praised” (Proverbs 31:30).*

This is the foundation everything else is built on! If she loves God, the rest follows. Don’t date a woman who half-heartedly follows God. I know this can be tough, and that as you get older and remain single it can be increasingly tempting to settle. I went through college facing this temptation, as it seemed the only girls who were interested in me were unsaved. They were not overtly sinful women; they were kind, did not use profanity, and miraculously laughed at my humor (which is an odd balance of quick wit and cringeworthy dad jokes). But they did not love God; they were atheist, agnostic, or Muslim. It was difficult, and I expect this will be a continuing temptation. But I had to recall the importance of loving God highlighted in Scripture, the command to not be unequally yoked with an unbeliever, and the consequences for settling. Look at the example of Solomon: he loved God and followed Him earnestly in the beginning, but godless wives pulled his heart away. You are not greater than Solomon! Solomon fell in this area, and Scripture directly commands us to avoid this pitfall. You may be tempted to yield on this point or change what “loving God” looks like. Just having a Bible or liking the idea of Jesus is not loving God. She needs to LOVE God and fear Him! Her love for God should be in her desire to obey His commands. Men, this is nonnegotiable. She must already love Christ with all her heart before you consider her. Don’t settle for a woman who is ambivalent toward Christ and hope that she’ll love Him more as time goes on. Don’t settle for someone who loves Him less.

---

<sup>17</sup> These standards are partially derived from a sermon series by Shawn Farrell. July – August 2018. *Relationships*. Available at <https://fbccollegeministry.com/media/2018/6/18/relationships-intro-purpose-of-dating-and-common-errors>.

### **She Loves Others**

*“Older women likewise are to be reverent in behavior, not slanderers or slaves to much wine. They are to teach what is good, and so train the young women to love their husbands and children” (Titus 2:3-4).*

The woman should be loving toward her family, friends, and others. She is called to love her children and husband, and loving others should be evident in her singleness. A girlfriend does not magically transform into a loving wife on your wedding day. She should be kind and loving now! A woman with a reputation for being unloving is a big warning. If she is bitter, resentful, or prone to grudges, stay away!

### **She Is Pure**

*“For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you abstain from sexual immorality; that each one of you know how to control his own body in holiness and honor, not in the passion of lust like the Gentiles who do not know God” (1 Thessalonians 4:3-5).*

The world encourages people to be free and open with their sexuality, but Christians are called to be different. A Christian's past may include sexual sin, but their present should be defined as seeking to glorify Christ in purity. Rather than using revealing clothing or coarse speech to attract a man, a godly woman is pure of heart and speech.

### **She Disciples**

*“Older women likewise are to be reverent in behavior, not slanderers or slaves to much wine. They are to teach what is good, and so train the young women to love their husbands and children, to be self-controlled, pure, working at home, kind, and submissive to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be reviled” (Titus 2:3-5).*

This may look different depending upon her age, but Scripture is clear that older women should be discipling younger women. If she is in her twenties, she can be involved in children's, junior high, or high school ministries to disciple younger girls. She may not be in these “formal” discipleship ministries, but she should have a desire to help other people grow to become more like Christ. Look for a woman who desires to help others know and worship Christ more. This can show you how she may approach future children. A refusal to disciple others is a clear warning to stay away. She should also be disciplined by an older godlier woman, or at least open to being disciplined if she is not currently being disciplined. Discipleship is a foundational part of the Christian life! Discipleship does not end with marriage, and is a crucial way to grow to be like Christ.

### **She Is Content**

*“But godliness with contentment is great gain” (1 Timothy 6:6).*

Look for a woman who is satisfied in Christ. The world encourages people to want more and more, and to never be satisfied. Yet the Christian call is entirely different: we have Christ and have been redeemed by Him from the punishment we deserve! What else do we need? Look for a woman who is content, not chasing after the world’s standards.

### **How to Ask**

When you’ve found a woman who has the above qualities, get to know her. Spend time with her in ministry and mixed groups. If there are common interests and you think there may be mutual attraction, be clear about what you are asking. Are you going out to get to know each other, or do you see this as a date in a romantic relationship? And if she says “no”, that is okay! Accept the “no”, and do not make it weird. This can be difficult, but be intentional about treating her as a normal friend to the best of your ability. You will do your sister in Christ a great help by doing this.

### **For Women**

Women can be unsure if their standards for men they are willing to date or marry are too low or too high, and when a man asks, they can be unsure whether to say yes or no.

Just as men can be tempted to date any women who will say yes, some women will say yes to any man who will ask. Some women’s standards are far too low. Their desire to be married means that they lower the bar so low a guy could trip over it. You should have high, but not unrealistic, standards. If your father is a great Christ-follower who loves and shepherds his family, you should not expect a man to exhibit these qualities to the same degree. Your father has spent decades spiritually maturing and being sanctified by the Holy Spirit and trials. Young men who ask you must be Christ-followers, and they must be loving, but don’t expect them to be the same spiritual leader your father is. The man will not meet all of your expectations to the highest degree. This is a great area to get counsel on from other spiritually-mature women. Talk through your expectations and get their input on whether your expectations are reasonable.

What are some areas in which you should have standards? While the following is not exhaustive, it can serve as a helpful baseline.

### **He Loves God**

*“And one of them, a lawyer, asked him a question to test him. “Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?” And he said to him, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and*

*with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment” (Matthew 22:35-38).*

This is the foundation for everything in a Christian life, and a man who has does not love God with all his heart will only pull you from Him. Don't flirt to convert; don't think "I can change him". Look for a man who already loves Christ; it's nonnegotiable. And that may mean that there just aren't any options for you right now. If you're in a time in life where the only single men don't really love Christ, do not settle. Paul is abundantly clear when writing to the Corinthians, saying

*Do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers. For what partnership has righteousness with lawlessness? Or what fellowship has light with darkness? What accord has Christ with Belial? Or what portion does a believer share with an unbeliever? What agreement has the temple of God with idols? (2 Corinthians 6:14-16)*

Don't consider a relationship with a man who doesn't love God. While the Bible may not speak directly about how you should date, it does command us directly about *who* we should date. Do not be yoked with an unbeliever. This needs to be your top requirement for any man you would consider. He must love God more than you, his job, his family, or anything else!

#### **He Is Growing**

*“Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation” (1 Peter 2:2).*

The man should not be complacent in his spiritual walk. Growing in Christ is a command to all believers. If he is to lead you in Christ, he needs to be growing in Christ. He will not be perfect, and you cannot expect him to be. No person is perfect, including yourself! Both of you are in the process of sanctification. But the man should be striving to grow to become more like Christ. Do you see evidence that he is growing, or trying to grow, in Christ?

#### **He Serves**

*“As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace” (1 Peter 4:8).*

Peter commands that Christians should use their gifts to serve one another as a "steward" of God's grace. Paul describes singleness as a gift, and the job description of the single is to be undistracted in devotion to the Lord. Connecting these two thoughts, we have singleness as a gift, given with a command to use our gifts to serve the church. Therefore,



single Christians must be using their singleness to serve the church! Steward your gift of singleness well! You cannot be devoted to the Lord and be uncommitted to His bride, the Church. A man who is not serving is not living out his call as a single. If he isn't fulfilling his role in singleness, there isn't a reason to think he would suddenly fulfill his role in a relationship or future marriage.

#### **He Is Self-Controlled**

*"Likewise, urge the younger men to be self-controlled" (Titus 2:6).*

A man who does not have self-control may waste dozens of hours a week on video games, be careless with his speech, be overweight and prone to eating too much, or other similar signs. God's Word shows that we are to be self-controlled, and a man lacking self-control reveals spiritual immaturity and a tendency to be ruled by his own desires. Do not consider a man who is known for a lack of self-control. This is a vital characteristic that the Scripture repeatedly exhorts young men to pursue. A husband who lacks self-control is a miserable partner who causes stress, anger, and discontentment.

#### **He Is Humble**

*"Likewise, you who are younger, be subject to the elders. Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility toward one another, for 'God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble'" (1 Peter 5:5).*

Humility is commanded by God and modelled by Christ. Young men are frequently exhorted to be humble throughout Scripture as pride can be a defining sin for many. A proud man will make a miserable partner, especially in a marriage where he is supposed to lead you with love. If he is arrogant or otherwise defined by his pride, stay away. A humble man is teachable and approachable. A prideful man acts as an authoritarian in his household and refuses to take counsel from his wife on key decisions.

#### **He Provides**

*"But if anyone does not provide for his relatives, and especially for members of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever" (1 Timothy 5:8).*

As discussed above, a man may not meet these to the degree you are hoping, and this particular standard can look very different depending on your age and his age. As a woman in your early twenties, expecting a man to make six figures is quite unreasonable. But he should be working and have a plan for the future. And if he is currently living with his parents, he should have an intentional, achievable plan to move out. If you're in your mid-thirties, you're likely looking for a man who's settled into some type of stable career.

Regardless of his age, is he giving and saving? Does he show financial discipline enough to not spend his whole paycheck on food, fun, and bills?

If his career goal is working at a warehouse for minimum wage while spending 20 hours per week streaming himself playing video games, STAY AWAY. Many boys today want get-rich-quick schemes or to play video games and get paid for it. STAY AWAY.

### **How to Respond**

When a man asks you on a date, the best thing you can do is be clear. Either give a definite yes, a definite no, or ask time to think about it. It's okay to ask for time and talk to some godly women who know him. If he's in a ministry, you can ask the ministry leader about the man to see if he shows the qualities you should be looking for.

Don't say no and at the same time give him hope or room to expect you may change your mind. Be clear in your answer. It can also help to think of how you may respond to men who are frequently in your social circles. If a guy in your young adults ministry asks you out, is he a yes or a no? This can help you be prepared and not be caught off-guard.

### **Responding to Questions About Singleness**

A final note regarding your role in singleness: your response to questions about your singleness can be a powerful testimony of God's goodness in your life. Your friends, family, and ministry leaders likely ask you constantly about your relationship status. Unfortunately, the church has not done a good job speaking about or toward singles. Their questions can be hurtful at times, as if they assume that you are someone to be pitied and "God will bring you someone, dear!" You may walk into a ministry setting and see a good friend for the first time in months, and you are immediately greeted with "Are you still single? Oh, okay. Well...do you want to be married?". How do you respond to these uncomfortable situations? If your experience is like mine, you are probably asked questions like these at least once a week. You need to have a biblical and gracious response toward these questions.

You need to think through what is driving these questions. For many, they ask because they don't properly understand Christian singleness and the goodness that it brings, so they can't wait for you to not be single. They likely haven't thought on the theology of singleness. In my case, I know that my singleness has forced me to grapple with this. I have frequently asked myself "Why am I still single? Is there something wrong with me? I might be called to lifelong singleness, what does that mean for my life?" They have not had to wrestle with these questions. Be gracious and understanding toward them, knowing that God gives each person their own gift (1 Corinthians 7:7). And finally, do not forget that they could be asking because they have experienced the goodness that God

gives in marriage, and they want that for you. Marriage is an undeniably good gift designed by God!

The main thing to emphasize in your response toward these questions is your unique call and ability as a single. You can say that you are single, and striving to obey Paul's command to be undistracted in your devotion to Christ. You can tell them about how your singleness has enabled you to do some unique ministry opportunities. Try to use these questions to show them the goodness of singleness! Responding well can help to re-train the church to see singleness for the unique and good gift from God that Paul so clearly lays out in 1 Corinthians 7, and that Christ extols in Matthew 19:12-13! Many believers do not properly understand this gift.

If they phrase a question in a hurtful way, you can graciously say that the way the question is phrased doesn't show the value of singleness. Be honest toward them, because you can perhaps help them to ask the question better next time. Instead of only asking questions about your dating life (or lack thereof), encourage them to ask about what ministry you're involved in, or how your devotional time is going. Coach them to see that there are more questions to ask a single than just whether they are dating or whether they want to date. You are an ambassador for Christian singleness, and your response toward these questions can change how they view singleness. If you are joyless in your singleness, it is easier for others to assume that singleness is undesirable. But if you are joyful and can honestly say "I thank God for my singleness", imagine what an impact that can have! Pursue the traits talked about above and help others to see that this time in your life is a good gift from God!

## Chapter 4      Developing a Biblical View of the Opposite Sex

The world says that there is no difference between men and women. Angela Saini, British science journalist and author of *Inferior: How Science Got Women Wrong – And the New Research that's Rewriting the Story*, argues that “we may need to fundamentally rethink human sexual behavior and these Darwinian ideas we have around male and female sex roles and male and female roles in society.”<sup>18</sup> The world is preaching that men and women should freely explore sex and their desires. Women should lead and men need to “check their privilege.” Gender roles are really just a social construct and need to be rethought and challenged, the culture says. The Bible is anti-woman and sexist, the culture says.

Do you know what God’s Word says on these things? Do you cultivate an accurate view of the opposite sex through God’s Word? Rather than saving this for a relationship, discover what God’s Word says about men and women NOW. The world has many ideas of what the opposite sex is able to do or should look like. The worldly ideas of men and women are opposed to the biblical view of men and women, and if you are not studying the biblical view you can slowly embrace the worldly view. This will negatively change who you hope for in a relationship as you start to desire someone who matches the world’s definition rather than the biblical definition of the opposite sex. Thus, developing a biblical view of the opposite sex is critical for Christian singles.

Increasingly, calls to rethink gender roles have come not only from outside, but from inside the church. Many in the church argue we need to rethink the biblical traditional view of gender roles, like Daniela Gennrich in her work *A Gender Transformation Toolkit for Women and Men in Churches*. I believe she intentionally puts women before men to “disrupt” a perceived patriarchal bent in the church. She writes that a new hermeneutic is needed to show:

...how it has been possible that the Bible has been misused to justify prejudices, and how to avoid these pitfalls. [These new hermeneutics] show how we can read the Bible in ways that allow the Holy Spirit to speak into

---

<sup>18</sup> Schulte, Brigid. 2018. *How Different are Men and Women, Really?* <https://slate.com/human-interest/2018/02/an-interview-with-angela-saini-author-of.html> (accessed February 2021).

our lives and our world in fresh ways that are more consistent with the Gospel.<sup>19</sup>

This is a call to reinterpret Scripture to arrive at a meaning other than distinct gender roles, which the author calls “pitfalls.” This work was published by the Norwegian Church Aid, and is written from the perspective of someone inside the church, wanting to affect change from within. She writes that Paul in 1 Timothy 2 “used his own patriarchal interpretation of the creation story to argue that women can only have a subordinate role in the church.”<sup>20</sup> She isn’t questioning the creation account; she is saying that Paul twists the meaning of the creation account to suit his own view that women are to be subordinate. This implies that Paul was sinfully motivated when he wrote a part of the biblical canon and undermines the core doctrine of the inerrancy of Scripture—that God’s Word, in its original form, is totally without error down to every word, not just main ideas. We can learn the best form of hermeneutic from seeing what Christ said on this. “*For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass from the Law until all is accomplished*” (Matthew 5:18). Christ communicated the importance of every letter and punctuation. The grammar of the text is important to understanding the text.

Notice how she says that this is “more consistent with the gospel.” These attacks against the Scripture always do so in the name of love or trying to “restore” the true gospel. But the gospel is unchanging and exists in perfect form in the perfect Word of God. To understand the biblical roles of men and women, you must submit yourself to what the Bible says, not what the culture decides on an ever-changing landscape of moral ambiguity. God’s perfect, inspired, sufficient Word is the basis for understanding the biblical roles of men and women and needs to be carefully studied. Because the biblical understanding of men and women is not only attacked by the culture, but from within the church itself, we must have firm biblical convictions on what Scripture says. If you are not firmly convinced of the biblical roles of men and women, people in the world and the church will pull you away to accept more “modern” interpretations which, at their core, undermine the gospel. As soon as you reject the biblical role of men and women, it becomes very easy to reject the biblical teaching on other related topics. We’ll explore how the Bible is so clear on this that to reject it, someone really has to reject core principles of interpreting the Bible. This is absolutely vital for single Christians because if

---

<sup>19</sup> Gennrich, Daniela. 2015. “A Gender Transformation Toolkit for Women and Men in Churches”. <https://www.kirkensnodhjelp.no/contentassets/c2cd7731ab1b4727897258c5d49246c8/nca-createdingodsimage-tool03-jun2015-open2.pdf> (accessed February 2021).

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

you embrace what the world says about the roles of men and women, that will change who you look for in a relationship.

Broadly, attacks on the biblical views of the roles of men and women have three dangers: they undermine the meaning of God's Word, they undermine the place of God's Word, and they undermine the gospel.

### **The Meaning of God's Word**

God's Word speaks abundantly clearly about the biblical roles of men and women. Andreas J. Köstenberger and his wife, Margaret Elizabeth Köstenberger, summarize their book *God's Design for Man and Woman* by saying, "There is revealed in Scripture a pervasive pattern of responsible sacrificial, loving, and caring male leadership; Women, also created in the image of God, under the leadership of their husband, are to partner with their husband in being stewards of God's creation in fulfilling the cultural mandate."<sup>21</sup> This is not a doctrine only discussed in a few passages (though this alone would be sufficient), but is instead clearly taught throughout the breadth of Scripture.

As discussed above, we must uphold the core doctrine that God inspired the Bible and it is inerrant, that there is no error from the broadest concept to the individual words. Below are the key verses on gender roles:

*"Then the Lord God said, 'It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him'...Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh"*  
(Genesis 2:18, 24).

A biblical marriage consists of one man and one woman living together in a loving, sacrificial, intimate union. A biblical marriage has two distinct roles, a head and a helper, which are equal in honor. This is set up from the first mention of marriage in the Bible, as the woman was made as a helper to man.

*"Older women likewise are to be reverent in behavior, not slanderers or slaves to much wine. They are to teach what is good, and so train the young women to love their husbands and children, to be self-controlled, pure, working at home, kind, and submissive to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be reviled. Likewise, urge the younger men to be self-controlled"* (Titus 2:3-6).

---

<sup>21</sup> Köstenberger, Andreas and Margaret. 2014. *Does the Bible Reflect a Patriarchal Bias?*  
<https://www.crossway.org/articles/does-the-bible-reflect-a-patriarchal-bias/> (accessed March 2021).

Paul's exhortation to Titus notes that one way older women are to disciple and train younger women is to teach them to submit to their own husbands. This is so that the Word of God may not be reviled. This is a critical point to focus on: encouraging or allowing wives to not submit to their husbands allows the Word of God to be reviled. How? Because this would place our culture and ideals above the clear teaching of Scripture, denigrating Scripture to always be subject to our whims. A wife asserting herself over or against her husband makes Christ look bad, as the marriage relationship is intended to reflect the unity and submission found in the Trinity. Instead, we must stand firm in what God has outlined in His Word.

*"I do not permit a woman to teach or to exercise authority over a man; rather, she is to remain quiet. For Adam was formed first, then Eve; and Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived and became a transgressor" (1 Timothy 2:12-14).*

Notice that this submission is not rooted in culture. Nearly every argument which seeks to undermine the biblical roles of men and women will come into these verses and state that the authors wrote these verses because of their culture. And yet here, it is rooted in the creation account and the fall, not culture. There was no "culture" back then! Paul could not have rooted his argument in anything less dependent on culture. That is a critical distinction which makes the "cultural" argument untenable. Additionally, the "culture" argument necessitates a belief that God's Word is imperfect and requires us and our "modern" thinking to reevaluate the text and its merits. God's Word endures forever (1 Peter 1:25) and God never changes (Hebrews 13:8), so any attempt to undermine the inerrancy of Scripture is undermining God's character.

*"Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Savior. Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit in everything to their husbands. Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her... let each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband" (Ephesians 5:22-25, 33).*

The man and wife have distinct roles given in Ephesians 5. The man is to love his wife sacrificially, as Christ loved the Church! Similarly, wives are called to submit to and respect their husbands. Note that there is never a mention of husbands submitting to their wives.

*"Wives, submit to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord. Husbands, love your wives, and do not be harsh with them" (Colossians 3:18-19).*



Paul's letter to the Colossian church in many ways mirrors his letter to the Ephesian church. Wives are to submit to their husbands (again, not to every man!), while husbands are to love their wives. He adds a unique qualifier to each role. Wives submit to their husbands "*as is fitting to the Lord*". Paul wrote in Ephesians 5 and elsewhere that a wife's submission is a picture of Christ submitting to the Father. He also adds that husbands are not to be harsh with their wives. Husbands are not to take any kind of advantage of their wife's submission and use their speech to disparage or hurt their wife. Rather, they should "*let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear*" (Ephesians 4:29). The biblical role of the man leading in love and the wife submitting in respect is again reinforced and upheld in Colossians 3.

*"Likewise, wives, be subject to your own husbands, so that even if some do not obey the word, they may be won without a word by the conduct of their wives, when they see your respectful and pure conduct... For this is how the holy women who hoped in God used to adorn themselves, by submitting to their own husbands... Likewise, husbands, live with your wives in an understanding way, showing honor to the woman as the weaker vessel, since they are heirs with you of the grace of life, so that your prayers may not be hindered" (1 Peter 3:1-2, 5,8).*

Peter notes additional reasons for these biblical roles. A wife submitting to her unbelieving husband can be a powerful unspoken evangelistic tool God can use to save her husband. Peter also notes that this has how holy women have treated their husbands, so submission to her husband is a mark of a holy wife. For husbands, living with their wives in an understanding manner comes with a dire warning: failure to do so can hinder their prayers. Wow! That should jolt every husband into careful consideration of how to live this out. Husbands need to not just be loving, but thoughtful and considerate of their wife and how they can best honor and cherish her. Notice here that Peter affirms the wife as equal heirs with the husband, so again, though men and women have different roles, they are ontologically equal. Both are equally made in the image of God, can have a deep relationship with Him, and can be used in incredible ways by Him.

These accounts are all so clear that the only way to arrive at a different meaning is to adopt an entirely new way of reading the bible (hermeneutic), with Pamela Milne noting,

Until quite recently the traditional interpretation of Genesis 2-3 went virtually unchallenged. But now many women find such patriarchal and misogynist views unacceptable. Some choose to reject both the interpretations and the

biblical account itself. Others believe that the Eve story can be recovered from patriarchy through feminist analysis and interpretation.<sup>22</sup>

Notice there are only two options: reject the interpretation and the whole Bible itself, or “recover” through a new style of analysis and interpretation. If you have to reinterpret every passage on a subject against its normal interpretation, your hermeneutic is wrong.

Michael Morris, Dean of Faculty and professor of New Testament at Grace Community Seminary, authored ten papers examining all that the Scriptures say on the role of women in the church. While these ten papers appear to be an authentic attempt at discerning the biblical position on this topic, there are several instances where it is clear that the only way for Morris to believe the Bible could support women in church leadership is to reinterpret or malign Scripture. Noting Paul’s use of the creation account to support women submitting to their husbands in 1 Corinthians 11:7, Morris writes, “The apostle Paul uses Genesis in a selective way. He notes that men are made in the image of God without mentioning that women also are.”<sup>23</sup> This suggests that either Paul doesn’t think that women are made in God’s image, which is certainly not the case (Genesis 1:27) or that he does but doesn’t mention it because it doesn’t suit the position he is arguing. Suggesting this undermines the inerrancy of Scripture by suggesting that Paul is selective in an erroneous manner and therefore “his” position is wrong. I write “his” in quotations because Scripture is written by man but through God, as Peter writes, “*knowing this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone’s own interpretation. For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit*” (2 Peter 1:20-21). Scripture is perfect because it was written by the Holy Spirit, divinely inspired. Paul could not have been in error any more than the Holy Spirit could be in error, which is blasphemous as God is holy (Leviticus 19:2). Paul did not mention women being made in the image of God, though he notes that husbands are to love their wives as Christ loved the church in dying for her, and to love their wives as their own bodies. Rather, he emphasizes this in 1 Corinthians 11:7 to compliment 1 Corinthians 11:3, where Christ is the head of every man and the husband is the head of his wife. Instead of assuming that the inerrant Scripture is wrong and a feminist hermeneutic is needed to “restore” an understanding to the text, we ought to examine the whole of Scripture to see that the consistent message is that wives submit to their husbands, not out of inferiority, but because that is the role God has sovereignly

---

<sup>22</sup> Milne, Pamela. 1989. *Genesis from Eve’s Point of View*.

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/opinions/1989/03/26/genesis-from-eves-point-of-view/dc371184-1f4c-4142-ac2d-d5efee72a0da/> (accessed March 2021).

<sup>23</sup> Morrison, Michael. No date. *Women in Church Leadership - a Series of Study Papers*. <https://learn.gcs.edu/mod/book/view.php?id=4261&chapterid=15> (accessed March 2021).

determined best glorifies Him and reflects the Trinity. This is reflected in far more passages than just what is noted above, but we have focused on the most critical passages to establish the clear teaching of Scripture. To argue against this requires a wholesale reinterpretation of Scripture, as this teaching is so pervasive across the Old and New Testaments that you must reinterpret large blocks of Scripture.

### **The Place of God's Word**

This way of reinterpreting the text places man's beliefs and his changing ideas of morality over God's Word, as if we need to reevaluate whether God's Word is "correct" after each cultural shift. God's Word is perfect and stands above the culture, so to reinterpret Scripture because of an argument from our reasoning and morality places us above Scripture as the ultimate authority. We do understand that there are some cultural differences in application, and some texts were unique to the time and culture they were written to. For example, Paul's command for women to wear head coverings, which was a cultural sign of submission and respect, is applied differently today. The core idea of submission remains, but how this is demonstrated changes. We need to look at what the author meant, then seek to apply that today. Culture does not allow us to reinterpret Scripture though there may be some differences in application.

Today, however, many are calling for us to reject what the author meant and create our own application that fits with their morals. Christians are called to reject these attempts and hold fast to God's Word, with Paul writing, "*See to it that no one takes you captive by philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the world, and not according to Christ*" (Colossians 3:8). Christians need to keep God's Word firmly as the authority over everything and not allow the culture to supplant it. If Christians allow the culture to undermine biblical authority on the roles of men and women, the culture will not stop there. We have seen this in recent decades, as appeasement and tolerance for error in the church has led to a landslide of compromise on other issues from outside and inside the church. Creation, church discipline, biblical marriage, church leadership, salvation through Christ alone, and every other foundational biblical teaching all are at risk by thinking the culture can dictate what portions of God's Word are true and which are not.

### **The Gospel**

This new way of reinterpreting the text asserts that we do not need to conform to God's design in our roles and that the problem within relationships and society is male authority. Therefore, the ideal society is one without male authority. This presents its own "gospel", where the sin is male authority and salvation is through overthrowing patriarchal interpretations and traditions. Andreas Köstenberger perfectly answers this by noting,

“Contrary to many feminists, the root problem of humanity is not male authority, or authority itself; the problem is human sin, which affects the way in which both men and women relate to each other”.<sup>24</sup> If you get the root problem wrong, you will get the solution wrong. The solution to the feminist root problem is to eliminate male authority and establish egalitarian relationships and leadership. The root problem according to God’s Word is to turn from our sin and submit to Christ, placing our faith in Him alone. Relationships are broken not because man is in authority but because both man and woman are sinful. This makes a man stubborn, unloving, and selfish and makes the wife bitter, unsubmitive to her husband, and discontent. The cure for this is not for the woman to lead equally with or above the man, but for both to repent of their sin, place their faith in Jesus Christ, and seek to follow His roles for them.

Bromleigh McCleneghan, who claims a pastoral position, argues in her article, “Straight, gay, bi, trans, intersex: we are beloved, and do God and ourselves a disservice if we are conformed”.<sup>25</sup> These people have a simple message: don’t conform to what the Bible says, be as you are. God’s Word commands us to not conform to this world (Romans 12:1), but instead we are to conform to His Word (Deuteronomy 27:10). This call by McCleneghan and others to not conform is more than simply saying that God loves all people (that is clear, as all are made in the image of God and Christ’s sacrifice is sufficient for any sinner [1 Corinthians 6:9-11]). Instead, this is saying not only that repentance from this sin is not necessary, but that it is a disservice to God and ourselves. This is a blatant attack on Scripture. This claims that Paul was not right; he was mistaken, and therefore the Bible is imperfect and we need to “correct”, “contemporize”, or “reinterpret” God’s Word because there’s no other way to arrive at a different understanding of the roles of men and women unless you fundamentally reinterpret it.

### **Different, Yet Equal**

The husband should seek to love his wife despite her sin as Christ loves the church, which will make Christ’s love that much more remarkable to him. The wife should seek to honor and respect the husband despite his sin, which will make her grow in patience and gentleness. However, the world proclaims there are no differences between men and women; men can do everything that women can do, and women can do everything that men can do. In fact, the world says that to restrict men or women to specific roles based

---

<sup>24</sup> Köstenberger, Andreas and Margaret. 2014. *Does the Bible Reflect a Patriarchal Bias?*

<https://www.crossway.org/articles/does-the-bible-reflect-a-patriarchal-bias/> (accessed March 2021).

<sup>25</sup> McCleneghan, Bromleigh. 2016. *Sex and the Single Christian: Why Celibacy isn’t the Only Option*. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/acts-of-faith/wp/2016/08/22/sex-and-the-single-christian-why-celibacy-isnt-the-only-option/> (accessed February 2021).

on their genders is archaic and even sexist. Can you see how not developing a biblical view of the opposite sex can alter your view of Scripture? As singles, we need to develop this accurate view of the opposite sex now. This influences how we read God's Word and who we look for as a potential partner.

### **The Biblical Role of Men**

What does Scripture call men to do and to be? Are men different than women, and if so, how? The Bible gives clear answers to these questions.

*“For the husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Savior” (Ephesians 5:23).*

Men, this means that you need to be able to lead. Your role as the spiritual leader means that you would be able to shepherd a wife and children in the Lord. The foundation to the biblical understanding of the role of men and women is that men lead. As a single man, you may think “But I don't have a wife to lead, what can I do to fulfill my role?” That's a great question, and while there will be some answers below, this is best worked through with an older, godlier man who can continue to help you in this.

First, you can lead in your personal life. This means taking responsibility for your actions and driving your own spiritual growth. Be proactive about your growth. Don't wait for someone else to disciple you, seek someone out who faithfully follows God. You need to take ownership and responsibility for your walk with Christ.

Paul writes that Adam is responsible for the Fall, despite Eve being the one who sinned. *“Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned” (Romans 5:12).* Why does Adam receive all the blame here? Because the man is responsible. Scripture shows that the husband is responsible for his wife (Ephesians 5:25-29), children (Ephesians 6:4), and finances (1 Timothy 5:8). It means that you take responsibility for your actions because you are responsible. If a family is in turmoil, the man bears the responsibility and needs to lead his family to glorify God.

Second, you can show leadership in your ministry. What if you aren't in a ministry? Well then, the answer is simple: get in one! Showing leadership in a ministry doesn't mean you have to be the main leader who makes all the decisions, but you can practice leadership through serving, assisting the leaders, and taking responsibility for one part of the ministry. Maybe this means that you lead the greeting portion of the college ministry in your church, or are part of a group of people in the ministry who help organize events or make decisions. Use whatever spiritual gifts He has given you to faithfully serve Him and His church.

Men, you need to take responsibility for your spiritual life and be able to lead. Women, this means that if you are looking for a man, he needs to be actively pursuing becoming more like Christ. If a man is passive and expects others to just seek him out and pour into him, that's not a biblical man who is leading his life.

Men are also repeatedly called to love their wives (Ephesians 5:25; Colossians 3:19; 1 Peter 3:7). Single men, you don't have a wife to love, but are you loving others? Do not be known as a man who is unkind, bitter, or angry. Don't be disinterested in other people or selfish. Be actively and intentionally loving toward others and serve them. If God calls you to marriage, don't expect to suddenly become a loving husband. But if He does not, Christians are still universally called to love others. Christ saying that loving others as yourself is the second greatest commandment (Matthew 22:39). Your role as a man is to be abundantly loving toward others.

### **The Biblical Role of Women**

*“For man was not made from woman, but woman from man. Neither was man created for woman, but woman for man” (1 Corinthians 11:8-9).*

Biblical roles are rooted in the creation order. Some, as we have looked at earlier, argue Paul writes from a cultural background of misogyny and because his Roman and Jewish cultures influenced his writings, we need to deconstruct that and interpret these passages as just being cultural. But Paul is very clear here: biblical roles are from creation, not culture. In order to reinterpret Paul, you really need to reinterpret creation. The creation account confirms these roles within a marriage:

God did not create the man and the woman at the same time, but rather He created Adam first and Eve later for the specific purpose of being Adam's helper. Eve was equal to Adam, but she was given the role and duty of submitting to him.<sup>26</sup>

Wives are called to submit to their husbands. For single women, this means that you need to be cultivating humility. Ask a godly wife if you can spend time with her and see how she interacts with her husband. But note that every passage which describes a woman submitting always only refers to her husband. Women are not called to submit to everyone else's husband, or every man, but only to her husband. This affirms that women are equal in status to man, and it is only within the covenantal marriage relationship where a woman submits to her husband as part of her God-given role.

---

<sup>26</sup> Grace Church. No date. *The Role of Women*. <https://www.gracechurch.org/about/distinctives/role-of-women> (accessed February 2021).

Those who attack the biblical roles of men and women almost always start with attacking the biblical role of women, and take issue with the woman being commanded to submit. Submission is *everywhere* in the Bible. Men are to submit to their elders (1 Peter 5:4). All believers are to submit to government (Romans 13:1-2) and to God (James 4:7). Husbands submit to the headship of Christ (Ephesians 5:23), and wives submit to the headship of their husbands (Ephesians 5:22). Submission is a necessary and defining part of the Christian life!

The world will continuously pressure you to be independent from authority and refuse to submit, and this can be traced back to the Fall in Genesis 3: “*Your desire shall be contrary to your husband, but he shall rule over you*” (Genesis 3:16). We read in the next chapter that sin’s “desire” is contrary and that Cain must rule over it. Just as sin wanted to rule over Cain, women, as a result of the Fall, want to rule over their husbands. Women, when the world and even some within the church pressure you to reject any notion of submitting to a future husband, realize this is directly a result of the Fall. As Paul writes in Ephesians 5:22, Colossians 3:18, 1 Corinthians 11:8-9, and 1 Timothy 2:12, women are called to submit to their husbands. That is a part of their role. Single women would do greatly to study this so that, if God calls them into marriage, they will be prepared to glorify Him through fulfilling their role.

But is Paul saying that women are inferior to men? By no means! This is shown in two three ways in Scripture. First, Scripture shows that men and women are equally made in God’s image and equally saved by Christ’s death:

*“So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them” (Genesis 1:27).*

*“There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus” (Galatians 3:28).*

Scripture is abundantly clear, from the first chapter in creation through the New Testament, that men and women are equal. Both are made in the image of God, and in Christ there is no status of one above the other. The world wants to rebuke Scripture for being patriarchal and for allegedly putting women beneath men. But Scripture could not be more clear that men and women are equal in status, yet different in role and function.

Second, Scripture shows that men and women are equal through natural processes. As Paul writes, “*Nevertheless, in the Lord woman is not independent of man nor man of woman; for as woman was made from man, so man is now born of woman. And all things are from God*” (1 Corinthians 11:11-12). Women are, obviously, vital for the continuation of the human race. God intentionally made them to be necessary for life, and this helps

show that there is no inferiority. Men and women are both equally needed for the human race to continue.

Thirdly, there is no inferiority of women because marriage roles are grounded in and reflect the Trinity. This is an expression of the biblical roles of men and women and points to the Trinity relationship. “*Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men*” (Philippians 2:5-7). Christ fully submits to the Father and yet Christ is equal with God. Similarly, the husband leads in a marriage but the wife is still equal with the husband. Leadership does not infer superiority in a marriage any more than it does in the Trinity. Far from supporting the inferiority of women, the Bible upholds this role as a unique picture of the relationship within the Trinity. Women submit to men, not because they are inferior, but because God has sovereignly determined that this role is best and best displays Him.

Men and women are different, but equal. They are complimentary and serve unique roles in relationships and in the church. The Bible does not denigrate women; it praises them and gives them a unique role to show Christ. “This voluntary submission of one equal to another is an expression of love for God and a desire to follow His design as revealed in His Word”.<sup>27</sup> They submit to their husband, as their husband submits to Christ and Christ submits to God (1 Corinthians 11:3). Reject the worldly philosophies that the world is pushing on men and women and cling to what is clearly described in Scripture. Undermining the foundational understanding of men, women, and marital roles will distort who you seek in a potential relationship and weaken your view of God’s Word as it becomes subject to cultural reinterpretation.

This is crucial even if you remain single because it lets you better minister to married friends. Never think that you have to be married to help or counsel married people. Experience is extremely helpful, but God’s Word is ultimately authoritative. You will not be able to empathize with their unique struggles as a married couple, but you can study God’s Word to know what He says about the roles of men and women and what a biblical marriage looks like so that you can encourage and exhort them!

---

<sup>27</sup> Grace Church. No date. *The Role of Women*. <https://www.gracechurch.org/about/distinctives/role-of-women> (accessed February 2021).



## Chapter 5 Social Media and Singleness

Have you considered how social media can affect you? Social media has become an integral part of our culture. Social media is used to share life events, daily updates, statuses, invites to events, and a host of other great things. As someone who is in youth ministry, social media is a vital way of engaging youth and sharing information. But social media can also be used poorly in a manner which leads to sin, like causing discontentment, wasting time, harming your witness, etc. Think of social media like money. It is not inherently a sin; it is a tool which can be used well or used poorly and lead you into sin. Christian singles should be mindful of how we use our social media. Here are some dangers and delights of social media:

### **Dangers of Social Media**

Unsurprisingly, the Bible does not say anything explicitly about social media. However, it does give us plenty of principles that we can use to discern how we ought to approach social media. Social media is not inherently wrong, but can present the following traps to single Christians which should be considered.

#### **It Can Cause Discontentment**

*“But godliness with contentment is great gain, for we brought nothing into the world, and we cannot take anything out of the world. But if we have food and clothing, with these we will be content” (1 Timothy 6:6-8).*

As a single, looking at social media where everyone posts relationship updates and happy moments can be a serious cause of discontentment. A 2015 study by Pew Research Center found that 27 percent of people feel jealous or discontent as a result of seeing social media posts about other’s relationships.<sup>28</sup> This may not be an issue for you, but if you find yourself feeling jealous, discontent, or envious of others as a result of social media, you need to reevaluate your social media use. If following someone frequently causes you to be discontent, you should unfollow them. If social media as a whole frequently causes you to be discontent, you should not be on social media.

---

<sup>28</sup> Pew Research Center. 2015. *Social Media and Romantic Relationships*. <https://www.pewresearch.org/internet/2015/10/01/social-media-and-romantic-relationships/> (accessed February 2021).

We can tend to focus on other people's perception of us and compare ourselves to them, and nothing causes discontentment more than comparing ourselves to other people. A perfect example is Adeo Ressi. Ressi started an organization called the Founder's Institute which trains entrepreneurs how to start successful companies. In five years, he had opened 165 schools in multiple languages and on multiple continents. He had helped over 2,500 businesses succeed and is worth hundreds of millions of dollars. You look at Ressi and think "Wow, he has an amazing life! He's helped people and still is abundantly wealthy". And yet Ressi himself was extremely discontent and felt like he had not accomplished much compared to his former roommate. His roommate was Elon Musk, who pioneered the electric car, built a privatized space company which can build rockets for one tenth the cost which NASA makes rockets, and then shot his electric car on one of his rockets into space! Even incredibly successful people can be weighed down by discontentment. Christians are called to rejoice in all things (1 Thessalonians 5:16). Christian singles can struggle with discontentment, and we can be tempted to think "If I only had a spouse! I would be so much happier in a relationship!" But a heart of discontentment is not satisfied even when it's needs are met. It's a heart issue, not a relationship issue. If you are discontent over your singleness, you will find something to be discontent about in a marriage. Work at being content!

Social media fuels discontentment because now we can see hourly updates from everyone and see how many "likes" a tweet or post receives. Social media tends to be focused on presenting the highlights of people's lives and that extends into relationships as well. Social media presents the best version of relationships, and this "gives many a "grass is greener" mentality, where they're not just wondering if there's someone better out there for them, but they actually "see" better options".<sup>29</sup> Social media can create a feeling of discontentment and a perception that being in a relationship is better than being single. After all, unsaved single people often post about their singleness in terms of sexual freedom or loneliness, and Christian singles often don't post about it at all. This leaves Christian singles with a feeling that, for a Christian, life is better in a relationship.

Don't try to establish your status on social media, but grow in your singleness so you can fulfill your job: undistracted devotion to Christ!

---

<sup>29</sup> Sinrich, Jenn. 2020. *What Your Social Media Posts Say About Your Relationship*. <https://www.brides.com/story/what-your-social-media-posts-say-about-your-relationship> (accessed February 2021).

### **It Can Distract**

*“Walk in wisdom toward outsiders, making the best use of the time”  
(Colossians 4:5).*

Social media can easily soak up your time and cause you to fail in your job description as a single: undistracted devotion to the Lord. All social media platforms use algorithms to present content to you which keeps you on as long as possible. A quick check on your status can turn into hours of scrolling. Young men can be tempted to engage in every political and faith argument they see. Men: reign in your pride. Not every social media post is a chance to prove your point! Young women can be tempted to follow every beauty trend and look for people’s approval. This is not an outright prohibition on social media, but rather a caution that, if it takes up too much of your time, it should be reduced to promote an undistracted devotion to Christ.

### **It Can Harm Your Witness**

*“Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us” (2 Corinthians 5:20).*

We are supposed to represent and honor Christ on social media. Your social media activity can act as a witness to others. If your social media shares posts which do not represent Christ well, you can be harming your witness to anyone who follows you. All Christians, including single Christians, are called to live a life pleasing to God (Colossians 1:10).

In order to not harm your witness, social media should follow all the same biblical commands as your speech: do not post what is filthy or coarse jesting (Ephesians 5:4); treat others as being made in the image of God (James 3:9); be gracious toward others (Colossians 4:6); do not be careless (Matthew 12:36-37); do all things in the name of Christ (Colossians 3:17); do not post what is obscene (Colossians 3:8); and this all only done through God guarding us (Psalm 141:3). Ensure that your social media preserves your witness by not posting anything you would not say in person or which would damage your representation of Christ as His ambassador.

### **It Can Encourage Lust**

*“And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. For it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body go into hell” (Matthew 5:30).*

The porn industry is always looking for more ways to reach potential audience, and unfortunately, Instagram, TikTok, Twitter, and other social media platforms have been infiltrated by the porn industry. But it’s not just porn companies on social media.

Influencers and friends may use extremely revealing clothing or talk about sex in order to get views or likes. Or maybe you have some friends who post pictures of themselves at the gym or in bathing suits that cause you to lust. They may not be trying to post revealing content, but we need to act on what causes us to sin, not what their intent is. Be extremely mindful of whom you follow on social media. Christ's command to cut off your hand if it causes you to sin is so applicable to social media! If they continue to post content that causes you to lust, unfollow them. You should not be nervous about scrolling through your feed with a friend nearby. It is better to live without social media than to be dragged into impurity.

### **It Can Sap Joy**

*"Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice" (Philippians 4:4).*

Social media spreads far more bad news than good news. You can find yourself bombarded by news that highlights the worst in people, presses "breaking news" that we should be outraged or saddened by, and stirs up arguments amongst close friends. We are to be joyous in Christ, and social media can make joy difficult. Be sure that your social media does not rob you of your joy. Note that Paul writes to rejoice "*in the Lord*". We don't rejoice in getting likes, winning an argument, or seeing happy posts on social media. Those things can make us happy, but they are not the root of Christian joy.

Remember: we are called to undistracted devotion to the Lord! We cannot be joyless in our devotion. Do you find your joy in social media? In the likes received or comments you get? Be mindful of why you are posting. Those who place their joy in social media are destined to be disappointed by it. Be sure that you are firmly rooted in Christ as your joy!

### **It Can Promote Pride**

*"Thus says the Lord: "Let not the wise man boast in his wisdom, let not the mighty man boast in his might, let not the rich man boast in his riches, but let him who boasts boast in this, that he understands and knows me..." (Jeremiah 9:23-24a).*

Social media revolves around showing your best self and getting the most likes. It can tempt us to be swelled up with pride over our achievements and everyone's notice of them. Don't post all your great deeds; you can serve in the background and no one but God will know. "*And your Father who sees in secret will reward you*" (Matthew 6:18). And if the above has convicted you to reduce social media or leave it entirely, don't post about it. "I 100% believe that it is good to fast from social media for a season, but here's a simple fact: You don't need to tell the world when you do. More often than not, this amounts to

bragging and extolling your own goodness.”<sup>30</sup> That’s signaling you’re spiritual. Why put that out there, except to boast in your “maturity”? Be wary of your motives in posting things that you are not seeking to boast and get approval of good deeds. If you find that you consistently post to boast, to get approval, or to feel important, get off of social media. It is a means of staying in touch with friends, and should not be an outlet for sin in the form of pride. I am not saying do not post about a great time with friends. But this is a warning from Scripture to be mindful that we boast in the Lord, not ourselves. So be watchful of pride in your posts, and ensure that the only thing you boast in is Christ and that you know Him! Christ’s approval is the only approval Christians seek. Be diligent that you earn His approval when you stand before Him because that is our hope and joy!

#### **It Can Mask Sin with “Authenticity”**

Culture values being authentic above everything. But as Christians, we aren’t to give way to venting, complaining, or other sins just because “it’s how I feel and I need to be authentic”. There is a huge social movement to be authentic to your true self and your feelings, but this can easily lead to sin. Be mindful that you do not give way to the culture’s call to be authentic above all else. Don’t post obscene messages or complaints just because “that’s how I feel”. Ensure that you are in control of what you post, rather than your feelings. God’s Word needs to dictate our actions, not our emotions.

#### **Delights of Social Media**

However, social media is not inherently sinful. It can be used in great ways, and if you are convicted by any of the above and want to change how you use your social media, think through the following biblical principles.

#### **It Can Help You Know Your Friends**

Part of being a good friend is knowing your friends, and social media can be a great tool to know your friends and stay connected! Social media can be a great way to continue to be a part of your friends lives even after they move away or, because of life changes like a new job or having kids, cannot spend as time with you. You can use social media to continue to see your friends and stay updated on their lives. You can see what their favorite moments are and what makes them happy.

Social media can be way to encourage, share laughs, inform others, and stay connected with your friends. A friend may ask you an important question and you can respond instantly over private message. You can stay up to date on your friends and share details

---

<sup>30</sup> Arndt, Tim. 2020. *Christians: Let’s All Stop Doing These 15 Things on Social Media*. <https://www.relevantmagazine.com/culture/christians-lets-all-stop-doing-these-15-things-on-social-media/> (accessed February 2021).

of your life, building closer friendships. You can learn more from social media about friends who you may not be able to see regularly. Part of being a good friend is knowing your friends, and social media can help this!

#### **It Can Help You Pray for Others**

As the culture continues to elevate being “authentic”, people become increasingly willing to share their struggles on social media. I have seen several people post that they are currently feeling depressed, a loved one has died, or some other difficult circumstance which allows me to pray for them in that specific area. You can use social media to inform your prayer life when you see one of these difficult circumstances. Don’t just “like” the post, add it to your prayer journal.

#### **It Reaches People Instantly**

Social media can be used to share sermons, Bible verses, devotionals, or a Christian worldview on culture. Your social media feed may be the only exposure some of your friends have to true Christianity. They may have bad experiences with judgmental, unloving, or hypocritical Christians. Most media depictions of Christians are either all love and no truth, all truth and no love, or hypocrites. Movies and TV shows do not typically present a loving Christian with sincere convictions. You can show your friends what a true Christ follower looks like! Your social media is a witness, and needs to be used in a manner that shows Christ to an unbelieving world! Do not get sucked into obsessing over politics or complaining about everything. Be joyful; be loving; be Christlike.

## Chapter 6 Personal Worship

Carefully develop the habits you want for life now! The time to be a man or woman of God who is devoted to reading, prayer, meditating, and fasting is now. Singles are called to live a life of undistracted devotion to the Lord (1 Corinthians 7:35), and that necessitates a life of faithful personal worship.

There's a saying I've heard about great biblical marriages: "The key to a marriage is never stop working at it". And the same applies to being single. Biblical singleness is intentional. It takes effort to glorify God and grow in your singleness. You will not "drift" toward glorifying God. You need to be intentional in working at growing to love Christ more, be more like Him, and be more devoted to Him in your singleness. Tim Challies exhorts singles to "Give God a lot to work with", and says,

The Lord is likely to make great use of the knowledge you gain and the godliness you observe as you spend time with older believers. Young Christians should be relentless in finding ways into the lives, homes, and prayers of older saints so they can see how the Christian life is lived, so they can ask honest questions, so they can learn by observation. God uses this kind of mentorship in powerful ways.<sup>31</sup>

Pursuing godliness while single gives God more ways to use you! Desire to be godly so *that* God may use you even more. God may gift you with singleness your whole life, so focus on developing a godly character now. If you are like me, you had the idea that by this point in your life you would be married. I thought I would have a wife and maybe a young child by now (I would love to be a father!). And yet, as the years go on, that has not happened yet. I am grateful that I am being more intentional about using my singleness and growing in godliness now, but I still wish I had been more devoted and grew more when I was younger. Do not waste years before realizing that your dreams of a spouse are not coming. I urge you: pursue Christ now.

While a spouse can be greatly sanctifying, spiritual maturity does not require a spouse. Remember that Jesus Christ lived His entire life on earth as a single. We must actively pursue sanctification as Christian singles. "Simply put, the church can idolize marriage

---

<sup>31</sup> Challies, Tim. 2018. *Young Christian: Give the Lord a Lot to Work With*. Available at: <https://www.challies.com/articles/give-the-lord-a-lot-to-work-with/> (accessed April 2021).

and make it the ultimate goal for maturity in Christ, relegating singles—no matter how old—to perpetual immaturity until they find someone to marry.”<sup>32</sup> Look at Paul! He ministered to Christ’s church in a unique way that would have been incredibly difficult to do with a spouse. He even says that he wishes all would remain single as he were (1 Corinthians 7:6-8). Paul intentionally used his singleness to serve Christ’s church in unique and powerful ways and pursued undistracted devotion to Christ. He could confidently tell the Corinthians later “*Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ*” (1 Corinthians 11:1). Seek to model an undistracted devotion to the Lord that others can seek to imitate.

### **Ministry Involvement**

*“And he answered them, “Who are my mother and my brothers?” And looking about at those who sat around him, he said, “Here are my mother and my brothers! For whoever does the will of God, he is my brother and sister and mother” (Mark 3:33-35).*

A single’s “family” is the church. Love them, serve them, and minister to them. You have far more time as a single to spend serving Christ’s church than you ever would in a relationship; use it well! “A season of singleness is not the minor leagues of marriage. It has the potential to be a unique period of undivided devotion to Christ and undistracted ministry to others”.<sup>33</sup> A person very close to me has recently been rejecting the Church, claiming they can worship God but do not need to be in the Church. Their father graciously exhorted them and said, “How can you love Christ and not love His Bride?” This is SO true! We need to be serving the Church. We are called to undistracted devotion to Christ, and how can we have undistracted devotion to Christ without loving and serving His Bride, the Church?

Single believers are able to do some service opportunities that married believers can’t, such as:

- Ministries with late night commitments. A married person may need to stop earlier because of children.
- High-risk ministries such as mission trips to hostile countries or local ministries to mentally unstable people. A married person would need to consider their spouse and may not want to put their spouse in that situation or risk abandoning their spouse if something happened to them.

---

<sup>32</sup> Woodson, Elizabeth. 2019. *Four Lies About Singleness*. <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/4-popular-lies-singleness/> (accessed February 3, 2021).

<sup>33</sup> Segal, Marshall. 2017. *5 Tips for Maximizing Your Singleness*. <https://www.crossway.org/articles/5-tips-for-maximizing-your-singleness/> (accessed February 2021).



- Ministries with long or irregular time commitments such as meeting after church, student camp preparation, or certain types of administration or support. A married person's schedule is less flexible than a single person, particularly if they have children, so they might not be able to serve in ministries which have irregular time commitments.
- Ministries with primarily weekend time commitments, which may include evangelism, equipping classes, or helps ministries. Weekends may be difficult for a married couple to give up, as it may be one of their few times in the week that they can spend with each other. Consider serving in a ministry like this to free them up.
- Sudden needs which come up. Married believers would have to talk with one another and see if they are able to take on this extra item. Yet a single can jump in to meet the need much more freely!

These are just some examples showing that singles can serve in ways that a married person may not be able to. You can also be an incredible blessing to married believers. Volunteer to stay late or relieve a married person so that they can get home to be with their spouse and children. Be intentional about using your singleness and freeing up others. As one godly single said, "Being out of my home multiple nights in a week for the sake of ministry is not just a possibility, it's a joy."<sup>34</sup> What a great way to use your singleness! Be intentional about using your time in service to others because you will never be as free to serve as when you are single. Push yourself to see how much you can serve Christ and His church! This is such an incredible blessing that singles have, and we need to take advantage of it.

*"Older women likewise are to be reverent in behavior, not slanderers or slaves to much wine. They are to teach what is good, and so train the young women to love their husbands and children" (Titus 2:3-4).*

Wives are called to love their own household. As singles without children, to whom can you show love? This is a good question. Christ's response to His disciples in Mark 3, quoted above, shows us that this can be applied to close friends and those in ministry. Titus 2:2-6 shows us that older men and women are to disciple and train the younger men and women. You can pour into the younger generation and show love to them! Disciple them, and be discipled, for the purpose of loving others.

---

<sup>34</sup> Barbour, Megan. 2019. *Uniqueness in Singleness*. <https://fbccollegeministry.com/blog/2018/11/16/citizens-of-heaven-in-the-world-but-not-of-the-world-matt-chandler-md48r-my5fe-t7k6c-wpazb-x66d2> (accessed April 2021).

## **Bible Study**

*“Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth” (2 Timothy 2:15).*

Study God’s Word! Be equipped in His truth and able to disciple others. You have more time to devote to studying God’s Word now. Remember, your job description as a single is undistracted devotion to the Lord. Work at that to be unashamed. And one aspect of that is to study and rightly handle God’s Word. Study His Word in-depth and move from the elementary truths to a deeper understanding of God (Hebrews 6:1-2). This takes careful study of His Word and discipleship by someone who loves and knows God. John Musyimi says, “Simply put, in order to heighten our worship, we must deepen our theology”.<sup>35</sup> Are you spending time not just reading His Word, but *studying Him*? Know the One you love through reading what He has revealed in His Word.

Meditating on God’s Word is the only way to protect yourself from worldly pressures to embrace the “explore yourself/be sexually free” mentality. Focus on God and His Word, as the psalmist declares,

*“I will meditate on your precepts  
and fix my eyes on your way” (Psalm 119:15)*

Protect yourself by studying God. It deepens your worship and shields you from unbiblical influences. I know I fail in this area. I spend my morning drives listening to some biblical podcasts, but podcasts are not a substitute for personal communion with the Lord in His Word. Do not neglect this; develop a habit to anchor you in life’s difficult moments.

## **Spiritual Gifts**

*“As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God’s varied grace: whoever speaks, as one who speaks oracles of God; whoever serves, as one who serves by the strength that God supplies—in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ” (1 Peter 4:10-11).*

Every Christian is given a spiritual gift by the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 12:7). Explore what your spiritual gifts are so that you can best serve Christ’s church. Based on the lists of spiritual gifts in Romans 12 and 1 Corinthians 12, spiritual gifts include administration,

---

<sup>35</sup> Musyimi, John. 2020. <https://africa.thegospelcoalition.org/article/love-god-with-all-your-mind/> (accessed December 2020).

evangelism, exhortation, faith, giving, helps, hospitality, knowledge, mercy, serving, teaching, wisdom, and others. If do not know how you are gifted and you are unsure where to start, try these five things:

1. Read what God's Word says about spiritual gifts. God's Word says a lot about spiritual gifts! Read 1 Peter 4:10-11, Romans 12:6-8, and 1 Corinthians 12-13. Find out what God's Word says and strive to obey Him in using your spiritual gifts (including your singleness!) to serve the church and worship Him.
2. Pray and seek guidance from God what these might be. The Holy Spirit bestows these spiritual gifts (1 Corinthians 12:11). Pray that He would guide you to how you are gifted so that you can serve Christ's church in the best possible way.
3. Try things out! You have far more freedom to explore what your giftedness is as a single. You can freely try out ministries to see where you are best suited.
4. Ask others who know you well and have seen you in a ministry about how you may be gifted. They can provide unique insight and encourage you on fruit they have seen. If your close friends all say, "You are so compassionate and loving!", consider a ministry that involves compassion. And if you aren't involved in a ministry or have friends who know you well enough to provide this type of feedback, this is a great reminder of the importance of both!
5. Look for fruit. As my pastor has famously said, "If you go to the hospital to minister to the sick and the person WANTS to die by the time you leave, you probably aren't gifted in mercy!" Look at past ways you have served and see whether it was fruitful. One exception to this would be evangelism. We are all commanded to evangelize. Evangelism is a matter of obedience. Some believers are gifted with a burden for the lost that causes them to be particularly driven to evangelize. But evangelism does not always have fruit because it is God who saves, not us. Do not be discouraged by a lack of fruit, but be encouraged by your faithful obedience. Think of Jeremiah, who prophesied and faithfully evangelized his country for years. He had no fruit, but he was faithful to obey!

Once you know how you are spiritually gifted, you can serve Christ by using that gift to serve in your local church as Peter writes above. Strive to be used by God and serve others! This can be done best and most profitably when you function how God made you and gifted you. All believers are commanded to do the kinds of works associated with the spiritual gifts. We are all commanded to evangelize, to serve, to be hospitable, to have faith, etc. Do not look at these spiritual gifts and think "Well, I'm not gifted in that way, so

I don't need to do that". You need to do these things, but God has gifted you in particular ways that you need to be ministering in.

### **Prayer**

*"pray without ceasing..." (1 Thessalonians 5:17)*

Cultivate a faithful prayer life! The Bible is FULL of passages on how to pray and what to pray for:

- Praise God for who He is (Matthew 6:9-10)
- Thank God for providing for you (Matthew 6:11)
- Ask for forgiveness from sin (Matthew 6:12)
- Ask for delivery from sins (Matthew 6:13)
- Confess your sins (1 John 1:9)
- Pray for your government (1 Timothy 2:2)
- Pray for the salvation of others (Colossians 4:3)
- Pray for the sick (James 5:13-14)
- Pray for the growth and maturity of others in Christ (Colossians 1:9)
- Praise God for fellow believers (1 Thessalonians 1:2-3)

Scripture is full of calls to pray to God. Samuel even says it would be sin for him *not* to pray for the Israelites (1 Samuel 12:23). Do you have a habit of praying to God? Are your prayers focused on your desire for a relationship, or do you spend time praising Him, praying for others, and confessing sin?

As you get older you may find it more difficult to be single. As more and more of your friends get married and you are left single, it may become increasingly difficult to feel content. I empathize with you, though maybe to a lesser degree. I admit that, as a man in my mid-twenties, I have not had this gift for as long as others reading this. But I do feel the longing and, as more of my friends get married, wonder "did I miss the boat?" Maybe wedding season is difficult for you each year, or seeing married friends happy with each other creates a longing to have that best friend in marriage. In these moments, I urge you to have some favorite resources you can turn to. Maybe it is this book, or another article or book. But our primary refuge as believers is Christ Himself and His unfailing Word. Pray to Him and confess your longing for a spouse. Pray that He would show you contentment and that He would help free you from this sin of discontentment. Go to Him in prayer often and make sure He is your first call when you struggle with this. Friends to hold you accountable are great. Books, sermons, articles, and blogs are amazing resources. But nothing can help us like Christ alone. He served God faithfully for more than thirty years on earth as a single. And on the cross, while suffering for our sins, His

perfect relationship with God was severed for a moment, as God unleashed millions of eternities of punishment upon Him. God cannot bear sin, and so on the cross as Jesus died, Christ's perfect relationship was disrupted for the first and only time. Christ knows what desiring unity with someone feels like, except to an infinite degree we cannot comprehend. And He willingly laid it aside for you! We can go to Him in prayer because He alone is our hope and He empathizes with us far more than we can know.

### **Fasting**

Fasting is something that most Christians do not give much thought to, outside of some who practice Lent. But as Betsy Howard notes, all singles are fasting from sex and other comforts associated with marriage:

As a single Christian living by God's commands, I do not have a sex life. While most of us don't view this abstinence as a fast, we should. By God's grace, I will fast from sex until he brings me a bridegroom. I will also fast from a lot of other comforts that come with marriage (along with the attendant trials). And if I die without breaking this fast, I will die in the company of the faithful ones described in Hebrews 11, of whom we read, "And all these, though commended through their faith, did not receive what was promised, since God had provided something better for us, that apart from us they should not be made perfect" (Hebrews 11:39-40).<sup>36</sup>

Singles are fasting from the physical and emotional intimacy that comes with marriage. This makes a future marriage, if it occurs, all the sweeter. And if marriage never occurs, then the reunion with Christ becomes even sweeter. Singles fast from sex, and may fast from other things such as food, drink, or social media to allow us to maintain an undistracted devotion to the Lord. And singles can give things up far easier than a married person. If pornography is an issue, you can just give your laptop to someone. If wasting time is an issue, you can get disciplined by a godly mentor and serve the church freely. Singles can fast from food and comforts easier than a married person, and this can be a great way to help your undistracted devotion!

---

<sup>36</sup> Howard, Betsy. 2014. *Should I Be Content with My Singleness?* <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/should-i-be-content-with-my-singleness/> (accessed February 2021).

## Chapter 7 Personal Discipline

Single believers ought to be focused on developing and maintaining personal discipline, especially in areas that God's Word directly speaks to. There are many areas which we could discuss, but we will narrow it to what is discussed below.

### **Your Thoughts**

*"Taking every thought captive to obey Christ" (2 Corinthians 10:5).*

Remember, Christian singles are to pursue undistracted devotion to Christ. This means that we need to be mindful that our thoughts do not pull us into distractions. What are some examples? Don't let your thoughts aimlessly wander into idols that pull you from God, such as pleasing others, money, success at work, video games, etc. Don't let these things consume your thoughts! Instead, be diligent to guard your thoughts, as a sinful or lazy thought life will quickly lead to sinning in word or action. Distractions will constantly try to pull you in different directions, and these often start with your thought life.

If you struggle with discontentment over your singleness, this is a battle which starts with your thoughts. I have often had thoughts which lead me to discontentment if not kept in check. Sometimes even verses come to mind, like Genesis 2:18, where God says, "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him". And in my pride, I think, "Even God says that it is not good to be alone!" Yet this is a classic deceit by Satan. God was referring explicitly to Adam. He said "the" man, not all men. Our thoughts can lead us to focus only on ourselves, and even misuse Scripture to justify feeling this way. Do not let your thoughts run wild. Be careful that you do not dwell on discontentment. Rather, we are put off sinful thoughts and put on Christ-glorifying thoughts (verse Ephesians 4:22-24). Instead of allowing yourself to dwell on idolizing a relationship, obsessing over work, or focusing on other's approval, do things that help you to think on what is true, holy, righteous, pure, etc. (verse Philippians 4:8). You can use car rides to listen to sermons and worship songs so that you think about Christ more. You can pray diligently that God would help you to worship Him in thought as well as deed.

### **Your Words**

*"Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear" (Ephesians 4:29).*

Your speech can be a powerful witness for Christ and encourages believers. Conversely, you may lack discipline with your tongue and say whatever comes to mind. This could include frequently saying inappropriate jokes or innuendos, gossiping, complaining, or cursing. Do not be known as a believer whose speech conflicts with his faith, but rather let your speech be a testimony to others! Actively strive to be encouraging, loving, and thankful in your speech. Ask some close friends where you could grow the most.

A few years ago, I was known for joking with my friends at their expense. There was a consistent pattern of inappropriate jokes, but only with my closest friends. I liked being “the funny guy”, and I liked testing my boundaries. It was completely opposite of what a Christian’s speech should be, and it took being confronted with this sin to realize what damage I was doing to myself and, more importantly, to Christ, whom I am an ambassador for. I had to spend years intentionally encouraging others to develop a pattern of speech which glorified God. While I am far from perfect still, I am thankful that others were able to show me this area where I needed to grow. Your speech can be such a powerful testimony of Christ’s love; use it well! Seek to be a believer whose speech reflects your undistracted devotion to Christ.

### **Your Friendships**

*“Whoever walks with the wise becomes wise, but the companion of fools will suffer harm” (Proverbs 13:20).*

It is difficult, though not impossible, to maintain undistracted devotion to Christ if your closest friends do not. Are your friends obsessed with money, status, relationships, or other things that can pull you farther from God? Or do they pursue Christ, laying aside every sin and weight (Hebrews 12:1)? Surround yourself with friends who adore Christ and push you want to follow Christ with all your heart.

We also need to be mindful of how our friends treat singleness. Friends will make jokes about you being single, but there’s a line that can be crossed. If jokes become incessant, and your friends can make you discontent in your singleness, you need to have an honest conversation with them. Friends can be a terrific motivator to serve the Lord and drive you to glorify Him more. If you have single friends who are discontent, be the friend who drives them to glorify God! Exhort them, model undistracted devotion for them, and do anything else you can to help them live out their God-given purpose in this unique season in life.

Married believers have an advantage in that their spouse is a key way God sanctifies them. Every Christian married man I know has said that their wife is instrumental to them growing to be more like Christ. They may say something in a group and afterward their

wife pulls them aside and shows them that what they said was insensitive, prideful, or otherwise not edifying. Single believers need to have intimate friendships with other believers who will similarly hold them accountable and help them grow to be more like Christ. We all have blind spots; areas of sin that we do not realize but others do. Married believers have a spouse who lives with them and can show these blind spots to them. Single believers need this through intimate friendships. If your friends do not hold you accountable like this and exhort you to be more Christlike, ask them why! You may come off as prideful or confrontational. For several years, there was a pattern in my life of thinking I was maturing, then a close friend would tell me of an issue that he and several others had been noticing, and that others had told my friend about. Those people, though mutual friends, thought I would get defensive if confronted about a sin. I kept getting frustrated at them, thinking they were not being good friends by not telling me. But it was my fault! I was prideful and defensive, and needed to intentionally work on humility when confronted with sin. Evaluate your friendships. You do not just need “friends”, you need intimate, biblical friendships with mutual love, encouragement, and exhortation. And strive to be this friend toward other believers!

As Sam Allberry notes “We are not designed to live without intimacy. Marriage is not the sole answer to the observation, ‘It is not good that the man should be alone’ (Genesis 2:18).<sup>37</sup> Singles need friendship; we need relational intimacy. Do not be an island. Be intimate friends with believers who love you, encourage you, exhort you, and help you be more like Christ. It is not good that man be alone, but singles do not have to be and should not be! Get closely connected through the local church and build close friendships.

### **Your Body**

*“But I discipline my body and keep it under control” (1 Corinthians 9:27).*

Do not be a lazy single who has no bodily discipline (waking up on time, working out, etc.). Some singles may even have the mindset of “Well, God brings people together, so I don’t need to work out or take care of my appearance”. Remember, God is sovereign, but we are still responsible! Be disciplined; take care of yourself.

*“...for while bodily training is of some value, godliness is of value in every way, as it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come”  
(1 Timothy 4:8).*

Bodily discipline is of some value. It’s not the most important thing, but the interesting thing about bodily discipline is that it often strongly affects other disciplines. Those who

---

<sup>37</sup> Allberry, Sam. *7 Myths about Singleness*. Page 48.



never work out, don't wake up with their alarm, and don't watch what they eat generally are not as disciplined in other areas. For example, reading God's Word consistently becomes difficult without a fixed morning routine. While anecdotal, I have found that I am more spiritually disciplined when I am exercising, waking up on time, and being mindful of what I eat. It's a matter of exercising self-control. If you are having difficulty maintaining a consistent prayer life and reading God's Word, integrate your spiritual discipline with your bodily discipline by setting an earlier alarm and praying and reading before you leave the house. Your schedule can be pointed toward sanctification by prioritizing these things. If you show no self-control in bodily discipline, it is difficult to flip a switch and have self-control in spiritual disciplines. Be disciplined in your body, it has value and can help you with spiritual discipline!

### **Your Sanctification**

*"Put to death therefore what is earthly in you: sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry"*  
(Colossians 3:5).

All believers should be putting to death sin and becoming more like Christ. Single believers have a unique advantage in that we don't need to consult with a spouse about cutting something out. If the TV is wasting our time and causing anxiety from the news, you can give it away. If a job is causing you to be constantly angry or depressed, or is causing you to gossip or use profanity more, you can change your job. You do not need to worry about how a change of job affects your spouse.

Married believers have a spouse who lives with them and will see sin patterns and exhort their spouse in these areas. This is one blessing in marriage which singles must find elsewhere. We need to be actively involved in the church and in discipleship so that others know us well enough to see our sin and exhort us. We need to welcome this so we can be constantly growing to become more like Christ (Proverbs 19:20). Do not be the single Christian who isn't involved and who no one really knows. That's living the Christian life by yourself! God includes 59 commands to "one another", so not being connected to the church is contrary to God's design. You cannot obey those commands if you aren't in fellowship with Christ's church. We need believers in our lives who we can count on to hold us accountable. Your sanctification is tremendously helped by intimate biblical friendships.

### **Your Time**

*"Making the most of your time because the days are evil"* (Ephesians 5:16).

Develop a habit of using your time well. Use it to invest in others, in the kingdom, and in spiritual maturity. Be willing and able to give your time to those who need it. Instead of being given to marriage, be given to ministry and others. Oftentimes, we think we are busy and can't fit anything else in our life. Sit down with someone and have them give you feedback on your typical weekly schedule. I remember when I was a senior in high-school and thought I was totally overloaded. I had school, sports, church, and high-school ministry. What more could I do?! I felt a bit stretched, and actually was prideful in how "busy" I was. And yet, when I put my actual schedule onto paper, I saw that I had nearly 60 hours which were unallocated every week! My discipler laughed that I could get a full-time job and still have plenty of time leftover.

However, each person has their own capacity. Do not measure your schedule against someone else's to see if you are making the most of your time; stretch yourself to your maximum, not someone else's. I wake up for work at 3:30am and often don't go to sleep until 10pm or later. My sister has an autoimmune disease, however, and needs her sleep, so she typically goes to bed by 9pm and wakes up at 7am. Is she making less use of her time? No! She has a different capacity, and is serving God and fulfilling all of her responsibilities well. You will need to figure out what your capacity is, then seek to maximize that. Push yourself! But do not get caught up in comparing yourself to others, either to make yourself feel prideful and superior or to feel that you aren't doing enough. Our actions and use of time are judged against God's standard, not someone else's. Use your time the best you can, but do not be caught up in comparing.

## Chapter 8 Career and Finances

In discussing areas where singleness and marriage differ, career is not typically mentioned. But your marital status can have a strong impact on your career. A typical job is 40 hours per week, and you may find yourself working consistently more than that depending on your job. Your career may span 30 or more years! This is a huge percentage of your life, so how does singleness affect this? And as you make money from your career, how do you use this money in a manner which glorifies God? These are critical questions that a single needs to get answers to now! Sadly, some singles do not view questions regarding career or finances as important. This chapter will show why these questions are important to every single, and how the Bible answers them.

### **Career**

#### **Working in Ministry**

Career choices and changes are more flexible as a single. Many singles, however, do not consider how their career may affect their ability to be involved in ministry. Singles can also go into vocational ministry and have far greater capacity for ministry than some of their married friends because the single does not have a spouse or children to consider. Therefore, they can work late nights, weekends, and other difficult hours in service to Christ and His Church! Riskier vocational ministries such as bible translation in a foreign community or overseas missions are also much more doable as a single. Remember how Paul in 1 Corinthians 7 reminds the church that singles do not face the distractions of marriage. You are free to devote yourself to ministry and serve with this unique undistracted devotion! This is a great blessing that more singles should take advantage of.

One struggle in this area for single men who desire to teach or pastor is that sometimes a church may discriminate based on his singleness, with Sam Allbery noting,

“It doesn’t occur to many of [these churches] that the very passages they’d prefer to hear a married person speak from were in most cases written by an apostle who was himself single. I suspect that many churches that gladly have Paul as an apostle would not have appointed him a pastor”.<sup>38</sup>

---

<sup>38</sup> Allberry, Sam. *7 Myths about Singleness*. Page 103.

Saying that we need to be married in order to preach on marriage places experience over the Word of God. Singles need to be encouraged to learn what God says on a matter, including marriage, and that God's Word is more authoritative than our experiences. Thus, single men can teach on marriage from the Scripture. They won't have their own experience to draw from, but that should drive them to focus more on what God says in His Word! If you are single and desire to pursue vocational ministry, this is a good thing to desire! Study God's Word and understand His wisdom and commands on your life and others. You can minister to married people and people with children even if you do not have a spouse or children because you have God's Word.

### **Working with Excellence**

Whether you desire vocational ministry or a traditional career, we need to work in a manner which honors Christ, as Paul exhorts,

*"Bondservants are to be submissive to their own masters in everything; they are to be well-pleasing, not argumentative, not pilfering, but showing all good faith, so that in everything they may adorn the doctrine of God our Savior" (Titus 2:9-10).*

We need to pursue a career with the desire to honor God in our work. Christians should be diligent, faithful workers. Whatever your career may be, strive to be an excellent example to coworkers, customers, bosses, and clients through your work ethic and attitude. Do not focus on pleasing others, but work to please Christ! Paul even notes that our behavior at work and toward our boss can cause others to "adorn the doctrine of God". "Adorn" means to make beautiful or attractive. Your work ethic and attitude can cause the Gospel to look beautiful and attractive! Singles: your work is a mission field! Even if you work at a company filled with believers, believers still need to remind themselves of the Gospel and be exhorted to honor Christ through work. Do not fall into complaining, gossiping, putting others down to put yourself ahead, lying, or other behavior that could malign the Gospel. Following these biblical commands to honor your boss, even when they are difficult: to love others, including difficult customers: and other commands is a powerful witness. And to be honest, the bar is set fairly low. I'll never forget when I was working as a laborer in a construction company, I went into the office on a rare occasion (most of my days were in the field, shoveling and doing other manual labor). I came into the office with a friend of mine who was also a believer. The dispatcher came out of the office and, when she saw us, said "I love you guys! I never hear any complaints about you!" We were both stunned. *That* was remarkable?! We were just doing our work! Yet you will find that if you simply fulfill the biblical commands to be loving, faithful, respectful, and hard-working, you will stand out. This will make the Gospel look good!

Some singles may have a right desire to be undistracted toward God and want to be all-out in ministry, and yet their work life is a completely different story. In ministry they are joyful, faithful, and hard-working, but at work they are complaining, unreliable, and lazy. This makes the Christian, and the God they serve, looked two-faced; one way at church and an entirely different way at work. This is a terrible witness and they are being disobedient toward biblical commands. God does not give you a “pass” to disobey at work because it isn’t “ministry”. *“Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward. You are serving the Lord Christ”* (Colossians 3:23-24). God cares about your work! Paul even says that you aren’t working for your boss, but ultimately you are serving Christ. All work is ministry, as Titus 2 shows above.

Conversely, some people are all-out at work, and yet their ministry is a completely different story. This shows that they value their work more than ministry. How can you have undistracted devotion to Christ if you don’t serve His Church? Do not compartmentalize your life and neglect work to excel in ministry, or vice versa. You must pursue honoring Christ in both of these areas! Christians ought to work in a manner which pleases the Lord, both in ministry and at work.

#### **Working for Independence**

*“And to aspire to live quietly, and to mind your own affairs, and to work with your hands, as we instructed you, so that you may walk properly before outsiders and be dependent on no one”* (1 Thessalonians 4:11-12).

Singles should pursue a career that gives them financial independence. This takes a diligence and intentionality to find a career that both excites you and can provide for you. Some singles, particularly women, believe that they will be married and thus do not pursue any kind of career. They are content to work part-time or minimum wage hours because when they get married it will not be an issue. Contentment is important, but we also cannot assume God’s plan for our life. We do not know whether we will be married or not, and need to plan for a career that can support ourselves if we remain single. Single men and women need to plan to support themselves through a career and be independent. And even after a woman is married, she may become single again following divorce, separation, or being widowed. All women, including those who desire to be stay-at-home moms, should pursue some skill-set that could give them financial independence if they remain single or become single in the future.

Many single women have a strong desire for motherhood, and some know that they want to be a stay-at-home mom. That is a good thing to desire! Unfortunately, however, some women with this ambition still go to college and amass tens of thousands of dollars in

debt for a degree they only intend to use for a few years. If you desire to be a stay-at-home mom, you should pursue a career that can provide for yourself in the event you do not get married, but does not saddle you with unnecessary debt if you do get married. There's no need to pick an expensive private college for a degree that a public college can offer at a much cheaper cost unless you can afford it. Single men and women need to consider what their education will cost them to obtain, and how this can affect their future. There's this fine balance and tension of wanting to prepare for your desires, but knowing that God's plan for your life may be different. I think my older sister is an excellent example of this. She has a strong desire to be married and have kids, and yet found herself at 27 years old and single. She was working at a medical office as a receptionist, and could not be financially independent. She realized she needed to be in a different career that would give her this financial independence. She was able to get a job in a new career with long-term growth and opportunities which have set her up to take care of herself if she remains single. This tension between planning for remaining single or being married is difficult, and there are not any clear rules on this. But if you find yourself wrestling in this tension, ask the women who are discipling you. Your decision can be dependent on several factors, and you need wise input from someone (or multiple people!) to help you process whether your current work situation is a good position for you to be in.

### **Working and Undistracted Devotion**

For all singles, we should be mindful that our career compliments rather than competes with our ministry and devotion to Christ. There can be a temptation for singles to throw themselves headlong into work, with an idea that "I'll slow down when I get married". This builds up a habit of being a "workaholic". Do not let your career consistently affect your ministry. I know of some singles who have intentionally chosen careers that allow them to keep their evenings open for discipleship and other ministry. That shows amazing intentionality to use every part of their life in service to Christ! But unfortunately, I know of other singles who have taken a great work opportunity in another area where there were no good churches, and watched them struggle as they became spiritually isolated. When a potential promotion or career change presents itself, remember to consider more than just the salary or long-term growth. Below are some questions to think through when considering a potential job:

- How does this job affect my ability to do ministry?
- Would any limits on my time to do ministry be temporary, or would this be a permanent change?

## *Undistracted Devotion*

- Would this opportunity require me to relocate, and if so, is there a solid church in the area?
- If there is a wage increase, how can I use this to worship Christ through giving?
- If there is a wage decrease, would I have to reduce my giving?
- Companies are increasingly becoming involved in social issues and advocating unbiblical positions. Does this company promote messaging, activities, or commitments that may make it difficult for you to be in the company?

And finally, your career now is more free and flexible than if you are married. A future spouse could affect your career. The wife may want to be a stay-at-home mom, which adds pressure on the husband to provide, even if he is very supportive of her doing so. Or the husband may expect the wife to quit her job she loves and become a stay-at-home mom when she has no desire to do so. As a single, your career is far less complicated. If you do not like your work or want to pursue a different opportunity, you can do so freely. A married person needs to consider the stability of their family. If the job may not work out, would the family be okay without this income for a month or longer while they find another job? If a job with great long-term benefits and growth presents itself, but would have a temporary pay-cut upfront, can the family do okay with this pay-cut for months, or perhaps a couple years? These are just a few instances where being single has advantages in your career choice. Singles have flexibility on career, but career choice should be intentional and can greatly influence capacity for ministry.

### **Finances**

Bring your money under God's authority, and use it for His glory. You have more financial freedom now than you ever will. Financial discipline is seen in three areas: giving, debt, and budgeting.

#### **Giving**

The demographic most indicative of giving to charitable causes is marriage. Compared to the unmarried, married households were 62 percent more giving in 2011. This was after all other factors like income, race, region, etc. were statistically adjusted for.<sup>39</sup> Statistically, single people give less than married people. Single Christians need to be the exception!

*“The point is this: whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. Each one must give as*

---

<sup>39</sup> Philanthropy Roundtable. No date. *Who Gives?*  
<https://www.philanthropyroundtable.org/almanac/statistics/who-gives> (accessed December 2020).

*he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver” (2 Corinthians 9:6-7).*

Don't have the mentality of "I'll wait to give until I get a career job". Too many college students and young adults take a raincheck on giving until it is more "convenient" later in life. Giving is a habit. If it's optional for you now, it's optional for you later. If giving is difficult for you to justify now, or you always cut giving first if the budget is tight, what makes you think it will be easier later in life?

A single is also able to give far more than a married person. Think of all of the expenses that a married person must budget for that simply don't exist for a single! Childcare, clothing, health insurance, extracurriculars, and so many other expenses. On average, a middle-income couple in America spends \$233,610 raising a child.<sup>40</sup> That's over \$1,000 per month, for 18 years! If the mom decides to a stay-at-home mom, the husband must also provide for her needs as well. This is just one more area where a single believer is freed from certain responsibilities of a married believer and this allows them to serve Christ in unique ways. Children are a wonderful gift from God (Psalm 127:3), but not having children frees up the single believer.

Giving is so much more than checking a box! This is obedience to God's command, this is participating in ministry through giving, this is supporting the local church, being genuinely invested, and all of this comes through joyful giving.

### **Debt**

Paul commands the Romans to avoid debt. "*Owe no one anything, except to love each other*" (Romans 13:8). Debt can be a crippling weight to bring into a marriage in the future. Too many Christians accrue tens or even hundreds of thousands of dollars of debt through education and, on their wedding day, bring all of that debt into the marriage. The average person today owes approximately \$39,000 in student loan debt, and will take an average of 20 years to pay this debt off.<sup>41</sup> Imagine coming into a relationship where both of you are debt-free! You would be freed to have children or purchase a house and could be generous toward the church and others! Heavy debt binds decisions and limits options.

*"...the borrower is the slave of the lender" (Proverbs 27:7).*

---

<sup>40</sup> U.S. News. 2020. *How Much Does It Cost to Raise a Child?* <https://money.usnews.com/money/personal-finance/articles/how-much-does-it-cost-to-raise-a-child> (accessed May 2021).

<sup>41</sup> EducationData.Org. 2021. *Average Time to Repay Student Loans*. <https://educationdata.org/average-time-to-repay-student-loans>. (accessed January 2021)



Getting into huge debt over credit cards or student loans can seriously impact a future marriage and ministry. Debt can delay having kids, make missions trips infeasible, lessen your giving, and cause much undue stress and anxiety. In a marriage, debt can substantially affect your ministry opportunities and delay having kids or buying a home for years. As a single, debt can limit ministry opportunity and hamstring your ability to give to Christ's church.

Wisdom and counsel are needed here, as certain professions require expensive careers but yield substantial salaries that are sure to pay off the debt (i.e., doctor, lawyer, etc.), and can allow you to give more in the future. If you desire to get a degree which would result in substantial debt, get input from whoever is discipling you to help you assess if this debt could still be acceptable given the long-term pay-off.

Whether you incur college, medical, or consumer debt, do not let it be an excuse to not give. Giving is commanded, and our own choices to get into debt do not excuse disobedience. And there are some kinds of debt that can be unexpected and difficult to avoid, like medical debt from an accident or sudden diagnosis. But even in debt, you can still give something. Look to the example of the widow in Luke 21 who gave all she had, although she had very little. In today's terms, she only had a dollar to her name, and she gave that dollar to the Lord! And yet some singles will withhold giving to the Lord while eating fast food multiple times per week. Giving is an act of obedience to God's commands, thankfulness for what He has provided, and faith that He will continue to provide. All of these should be demonstrated whether you have much or are struggling financially.

Dave Ramsey once said, "If you read Proverbs over and over again, you'll have a master's degree in finance".<sup>42</sup> Study what God's Word says on money management!

Count the cost: *"For which of you, desiring to build a tower, does not first sit down and count the cost, whether he has enough to complete it? Otherwise, when he has laid a foundation and is not able to finish, all who see it begin to mock him"* (Luke 14:28-29).

Don't start things you can't finish. Don't purchase something with zero percent down if you can't make the payments, or go into \$100,000 in student loan debt for a degree with which only makes \$30,000 in income.

Don't chase "get rich quick" schemes: *"Wealth gained hastily will dwindle, but whoever gathers little by little will increase it"* (Proverbs 13:11).

---

<sup>42</sup> Shapiro, Ben. *Dave Ramsey: The Ben Shapiro Show Sunday Special Ep. 36*.  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l-Kdq8cET1g> (accessed January 2021).

People are obsessing over “get rich quick” schemes. Become an influencer, win the lottery, sell multi-level marketing merchandise; get money any other way than working hard at your job! Faithful hard work at your job will pay off; don’t chase these phantoms which will only steal your money and joy.

Avoid debt: *“The rich rules over the poor, and the borrower is the slave of the lender”* (Proverbs 22:7).

Be a slave of Christ, not a slave to your debt! Debt restricts your life, as we looked at above. Be free to live and give how you want, rather than be under obligation to pay a huge debt.

Give generously: *“As for the rich in this present age, charge them not to be haughty, nor to set their hopes on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly provides us with everything to enjoy. They are to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share, thus storing up treasure for themselves as a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is truly life”* (1 Timothy 6:17-19).

Society says that the point of money is to get as much as you can so you can live the life you want. But as we discussed above, God’s Word shows a different motive: give generously. Whether you are a widow with hardly anything (Luke 21:1-4), or have a career and are very wealthy, give generously! This is an overflowing of a heart that realizes that God is the source of all you have (Deuteronomy 8:18), and because He has given this, we desire to give generously to others.

### **Budget**

A budget is a tool that allocates your money to categories. This reduces impulsive spending, allows you to stay out of debt, and lets you give generously! It is extremely difficult to accomplish the first two financial disciplines (giving and debt) without this. Have a budget and be disciplined with your expenses to free up your giving. Spending 25% of your income on food or shopping is a not just a bad habit, it is being a sinfully poor steward of your money. It is a terrible lack of self-control to bring into a relationship. Would you want to date someone who is in debt and has no savings because they can’t manage their money? The difference between a person who makes \$40,000 per year and is broke, and a person making \$25,000 per year and is financially stable, is a budget! Tell your money where it is going, be intentional about how you spend, and you’ll be amazed how far you can stretch your paycheck! This is being a good steward of what God has given you. He has given you your life, the skills you need, and the job you have. It is His money; manage it well!

## *Undistracted Devotion*

So, avoid debt like the plague; God commands it. Give generously; God will reward it! Use your career and finances wisely to serve Christ and His Church. You have unique abilities as a single in these areas!

## Closing Exhortation

I sincerely hope and pray that this has exhorted and encouraged you to live out your singleness in undistracted devotion to Christ. This is our job description and *privilege* as singles, and we have unique advantages over our married brothers and sisters which we need to take advantage of while we can. Devour His Word, pursue Godly friendships, and maximize your time as a single.

You are an ambassador for Christian singleness, and your attitude toward singleness can either make singleness look like the good gift from God that it is, or make it look like an undesirable, second-class status. Pursue becoming more Christ-like, run hard in ministry, and help others to see that singleness is a unique time to serve Christ and His Church! And if you choose to remain single than that amazing! Don't let others tell you that you are "missing out" on things. You are choosing to devote yourself to Christ, and the Church desperately needs people like you!

Singleness is a good gift from God, and one that grants unique advantages in serving Christ and His church! You can also use this to encourage other single friends to pursue undistracted devotion. Pursue this to such an extent that you can confidently tell other believers "*be imitators of me, as I am of Christ*" (1 Corinthians 11:1). Spend yourself in service to Christ and use this time well!

During the COVID-19 stay-at-home orders, Americans spent months at home. Any kind of "normal" schedule was thrown out of the window, and we had hours and hours in our days with nothing to do. Some believers saw this time as a unique opportunity to worship God. They read through huge portions of God's Word, books from amazing authors, led their families in Bible studies, and spent extended times in prayer each day. Others watched Netflix, and likely found themselves feeling convicted when they heard of how other believers used this time. We all had the same opportunity, but some used their stay-at-home time to intentionally grow closer to God. Singleness is very similar. You don't know how long it will last, and while there are some challenges to Christian singles, there are many unique benefits which we can use to pursue undistracted devotion to the Lord. If you do get married in the future, how sweet would it be to look back at your time as a single and thank God for it and how He used it to grow you! Do not be in a "holding pattern", waiting for life to begin when you get married. We are commanded to serve now! God uses people where they are right now. Pursue the work of ministry and devotion to

Christ fervently, and do not wait for a marriage which may never come. That would be such a sad waste of this unique time in your life!

Discipline yourself for godliness. I hope this book has encouraged you to serve Christ more and, perhaps, to be more disciplined in some area of your life to better serve Him with undistracted devotion. Tim Challies, writing about why we need to be focused on things which God can use, said,

Now here's the thing: Unless you are careful and deliberate, you will find that the things God is unlikely to use so quickly and easily displace the things God is far more likely to use. Those easy and attractive things that are fun, that demand no effort, that keep you squarely in your comfort zone, and that trigger all the brain's pleasure centers—these can keep you from doing what ultimately counts for so much more.<sup>43</sup>

Prayerfully consider whether there are some comforts that you are enjoying which pull you away from undistracted devotion to the Lord. Use your singleness, for however long it is, to grow in godliness. I know a woman who joined our church's college ministry as a young believer immature in her faith. She began to read one or two Christian books per week for months in her singleness! She used our college ministry library and read books on worship, sin, spiritual discipline, God's attributes, and more. And I would be hard-pressed to think of anyone who grew more in such a short time. Use your singleness like she did. Devour books. Be discipled and disciple others.

And if you believe that you want to devote yourself to lifetime singleness as Christ extols in Matthew 19:12-13, this is a good thing to desire! Do not feel pressure to "commit" to this. You don't have to announce, "I'm definitely called to singleness." God's plan may change and your desires may change. You don't know what tomorrow holds (James 4:13-15). You don't need to make sweeping statements about your life, just run the race hard in whatever position God has put you in.

You may be gifted with singleness for your lifetime. You may choose singleness as a life to uniquely serve Christ. This book is applicable in whatever situation you may be in, but if you are struggling with your singleness, do not struggle alone. I urge you to have a close friend or two who you can reach out to with even a simple text of "Hey, I'm struggling with loneliness, can you be praying for me?" Be involved in a strong local church and have friends who can encourage and support you. If you miss a few Sunday's because you are on vacation and no one misses you, you are either at the wrong church or you

---

<sup>43</sup> Challies, Tim. 2018. *Young Christian: Give the Lord a Lot to Work With*. Available at: <https://www.challies.com/articles/give-the-lord-a-lot-to-work-with/> (accessed April 2021).

are not involved enough. We who are single should be using our time to serve Christ's Church! Get connected to a great church (see *Additional Materials* for some resources to help you find a church). And if you want to be further encouraged and challenged to grow in your singleness, I have marked what I think are the five best sources in the references chapter with an asterisk. I highly encourage you to read these additional books and blogs. They have been a tremendous blessing to me personally, and I believe they will help you as well!

But above all these books and resources, depend on Christ and find true joy and contentment in Him! Do not depend solely upon books and sermons to help you, but turn to Christ's perfect Word and His bride, the Church. Read what the scriptures say about contentment, joy, and worship. We have all we need in Him alone! Strive to follow the unique call to singles to pursue undistracted devotion to the Lord, and run in such a way that you can tell other singles to imitate you, like Paul does in 1 Corinthians 11:1. Be an example to singles of this.

The church desperately needs to better understand the gift of singleness, and it starts with how you talk about and live out your own singleness.

## References

If you want to be further encouraged to use your singleness for Christ, I highly encourage you to read the five sources I have marked with an asterisk on this page. They have been a tremendous blessing to me personally!

- \*Allberry, Sam. 2019. *7 Myths about Singleness*. Crossway. Wheaton, Illinois.
- Arndt, Tim. 2020. *Christians: Let's All Stop Doing These 15 Things on Social Media*.  
<https://www.relevantmagazine.com/culture/christians-lets-all-stop-doing-these-15-things-on-social-media/> (accessed February 2021).
- \*Barbour, Megan. 2019. Uniqueness in Singleness.  
<https://fbccollegeministry.com/blog/2018/11/16/citizens-of-heaven-in-the-world-but-not-of-the-world-matt-chandler-md48r-my5fe-t7k6c-wpazb-x66d2> (accessed April 2021).
- \*Challies, Tim. 2018. Young Christian: Give the Lord a Lot to Work With. Available at:  
<https://www.challies.com/articles/give-the-lord-a-lot-to-work-with/> (accessed April 2021).
- Elliot, Elizabeth. 2002. *Quest for Love: True Stories of Passion and Purity*. F.H. Revell.
- EducationData.Org. 2021. *Average Time to Repay Student Loans*.  
<https://educationdata.org/average-time-to-repay-student-loans#:~:text=Average%20Time%20to%20Repay%20Student%20Loans&text=Report%20Highlights%3A,average%20%2432%2C731%20debt%20per%20loan.> (accessed January 2021)
- \*Farrell, Shawn. Sermon series, recorded July – August 2018. *Relationships*. Available at <https://fbccollegeministry.com/media/2018/6/18/relationships-intro-purpose-of-dating-and-common-errors>.
- Gennrich, Daniela. 2015. "A Gender Transformation Toolkit for Women and Men in Churches".  
<https://www.kirkensnodhjelp.no/contentassets/c2cd7731ab1b4727897258c5d49246c8/nca-createdingodsimage-tool03-jun2015-open2.pdf> (accessed February 2021).
- Grace Church. No date. *The Role of Women*.  
<https://www.gracechurch.org/about/distinctives/role-of-women> (accessed February 2021).
- \*Howard, Betsy. 2014. *Should I Be Content With My Singleness?*  
<https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/should-i-be-content-with-my-singleness/> (accessed February 2021).

- Köstenberger, Andreas and Margaret. 2014. *Does the Bible Reflect a Patriarchal Bias?*  
<https://www.crossway.org/articles/does-the-bible-reflect-a-patriarchal-bias/>  
(accessed March 2021).
- McCleneghan, Bromleigh. 2016. *Sex and the Single Christian: Why Celibacy isn't the Only Option*. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/acts-of-faith/wp/2016/08/22/sex-and-the-single-christian-why-celibacy-isnt-the-only-option/> (accessed February 2021).
- Milne, Pamela. 1989. *Genesis from Eve's Point of View*.  
<https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/opinions/1989/03/26/genesis-from-eves-point-of-view/dc371184-1f4c-4142-ac2d-d5efee72a0da/> (accessed March 2021).
- Morrison, Michael. No date. *Women in Church Leadership - a Series of Study Papers*.  
<https://learn.gcs.edu/mod/book/view.php?id=4261&chapterid=15> (accessed March 2021).
- Musyimi, John. 2020. *5 Ways to Love God With All your Mind*.  
<https://africa.thegospelcoalition.org/article/love-god-with-all-your-mind/> (accessed December 2020).
- Pew Research Center. 2015. *Social Media and Romantic Relationships*.  
<https://www.pewresearch.org/internet/2015/10/01/social-media-and-romantic-relationships/> (accessed February 2021).
- Philanthropy Roundtable. No date. *Who Gives?*  
<https://www.philanthropyroundtable.org/almanac/statistics/who-gives> (accessed December 2020).
- Piper, John. 1991. *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood: A Response to Evangelical Feminism*. Available for free online at  
<https://www.desiringgod.org/books/recovering-biblical-manhood-and-womanhood>. (See the forward entitled "For Single Men and Women")
- Piper, John. 2001. *The Dangerous Duty of Delight*. Colorado Springs, Colorado. Page 14-15.
- Piper, John. 2009. *This Momentary Marriage: A Parable of Permanence*. Available for free online at <https://www.desiringgod.org/books/this-momentary-marriage>. (See *Chapter 9: Single in Christ: A Name Better Than Sons and Daughters*, and *Chapter 10: Singleness, Marriage, and the Christian Virtue of Hospitality*).



- Piper, John. 2012. *How Believers Will be Judged*.  
<https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/how-believers-will-be-judged> (accessed October 2020).
- Piper, John. Sermon, recorded April 30. 2014. *Single in Christ: A Name Better Than Sons & Daughters*. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GLJj\\_FVR9Mg](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GLJj_FVR9Mg) (accessed January 2021).
- Schulte, Brigid. 2018. *How Different are Men and Women, Really?*  
<https://slate.com/human-interest/2018/02/an-interview-with-angela-saini-author-of.html> (accessed February 2021).
- Segal, Marshall. 2017. *5 Tips for Maximizing Your Singleness*.  
<https://www.crossway.org/articles/5-tips-for-maximizing-your-singleness/> (accessed February 2021).
- Shapiro, Ben. *Dave Ramsey: The Ben Shapiro Show Sunday Special Ep. 36*.  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l-Kdq8cET1g> (accessed January 2021).
- Sinrich, Jenn. 2020. *What Your Social Media Posts Say About Your Relationship*.  
<https://www.brides.com/story/what-your-social-media-posts-say-about-your-relationship> (accessed February 2021).
- U.S. News. 2020. *How Much Does It Cost to Raise a Child?*  
<https://money.usnews.com/money/personal-finance/articles/how-much-does-it-cost-to-raise-a-child> (accessed May 2021).
- Valk, Peter. 2020. *The Case for Vocational Singleness*.  
<https://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2020/november-web-only/valk-case-for-vocational-singleness.html> (accessed February 20, 2021).
- Woodson, Elizabeth. 2019. *Four Lies About Singleness*.  
<https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/4-popular-lies-singleness/> (accessed February 3, 2021).
- Whitfield, George. 2017. *The First Great and Primary Business*.  
<https://www.georgemuller.org/devotional/the-first-great-and-primary-business> (accessed January 2021).

## Additional Materials

The following books can further help you pursue undistracted devotion to Jesus Christ.

### **Finding a Church**

9Marks. *Church Search*. <https://www.9marks.org/church-search/>

The Master's University. *Find a Church*. <https://tms.edu/find-a-church/>

### **Personal Holiness**

*Holiness* by J.C. Ryle

*Pursuit of Holiness* by Jerry Bridges

*Pursuit of God* by A.W. Tozer

*Humility* by C.J. Mahaney

*Spiritual Leadership* by J. Oswald Sanders

### **Productivity**

*Don't Waste Your Life* by John Piper

### **Biographies**

*Here I Stand: A Life of Martin Luther* by Roland Bainton

*Bonhoeffer: Pastor, Martyr, Prophet, Spy* by Eric Metaxas

*The Forgotten Spurgeon* by Iain H. Murray

*George Muller of Bristol: His Life of Prayer and Faith* by A. T. Pierson

*The Swan is not Silent* series by John Piper

*Confessions* by St. Augustine

### **Sin**

*The Mortification of Sin* by John Owen

*The Enemy Within: Straight Talk about the Power and Defeat of Sin* by Kris Lundgaard

### **Evangelism**

*Every Thought Captive* by Richard Pratt

### **Studying God**

*Living the Cross-Centered Life* by C.J. Mahaney

*Undistracted Devotion*

*How to Worship Jesus Christ* by Joseph Carroll

*Knowing God* by J.I. Packer

*Knowledge of The Holy* by A.W. Tozer

*The Attributes of God* by A.W. Pink

*30 Days to Understand the Bible* by Max Anders

