

Defining Singleness & Dating

Message 1 of 3 in the series: "Define the Relationship"

A. The Bible defines singleness and marriage as gifts from the Lord.

1. God gives some of us the gift of singleness.

"Sometimes I wish everyone were single like me—a simpler life in many ways! But celibacy is not for everyone any more than marriage is. **God gives the gift of the single life to some, the gift of the married life to others.** I do, though, tell the unmarried and widows that singleness might well be the best thing for them, as it has been for me." 1 Corinthians 7:7-8 (MSG)

Note: God gives some of us the gift of singleness so we can serve Him with undivided attention. "I want you to be free from the concerns of this life. An unmarried man can spend his time doing the Lord's work and thinking how to please him. But a married man has to think about his earthly responsibilities and how to please his wife. His interests are divided. In the same way, a woman who is no longer married or has never been married can be devoted to the Lord and holy in body and in spirit. But a married woman has to think about her earthly responsibilities and how to please her husband. I am saying this for your benefit, not to place restrictions on you. **I want you to do whatever will help you serve the Lord best, with as few distractions as possible.**" 1 Corinthians 7:32-35 (NLT)

2. God gives some of us the gift of marriage.

"The man who finds a wife finds a **treasure**, and he receives favor from the Lord." Proverbs 18:22 (NLT)

Note: God gives some of us the gift of marriage so that we can model the love of God to our sinful, selfish world. "As the Scriptures say, 'A man leaves his father and mother and is joined to his wife, and the two are united into one.' This is a great mystery, but **it is an illustration of the way Christ and the church are one.** So again I say, each man must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband." Ephesians 5:31-33 (NLT) (*See also Genesis 2:24*)

Life Application: Whether we are gifted with singleness or marriage, our goal should be to love God completely and serve Him in all we say and do.

"You must love the Lord your God **with all your heart, all your soul, and all your mind.**" Matthew 22:37 (NLT)

"And **whatever you do or say**, do it as a representative of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through him to God the Father." Colossians 3:17 (NLT)

B. The Bible gives us some clearly defined guidelines for dating.

1. We should date people who draw us closer to God NOT people who pull us away from Him.

"Do not be misled: **Bad company corrupts good character.**" 1 Corinthians 15:33 (NIV)

"**Do not be yoked together with unbelievers.** For what do righteousness and wickedness have in common? Or what fellowship can light have with darkness? What harmony is there between Christ and Belial? Or what does a believer have in common with an unbeliever?" 2 Corinthians 6:14-15 (NIV)

2. We should value character more than outward appearance.

"Charm is deceptive, and **beauty does not last**; but a woman who fears the Lord will be greatly praised." Proverbs 31:30 (NLT)

"But the Holy Spirit produces this kind of **fruit in our lives**: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control." Galatians 5:22-23a (NLT)

Note: We should listen to the warnings of godly people who love us. "You will say, 'How I hated discipline! If only I had not ignored all the warnings! **Oh, why didn't I listen**...?" Proverbs 5:12-13a (NLT)

3. We should stay away from all sexual sin.

"God's will is for you to be holy, so **stay away from all sexual sin**. Then each of you will control his own body and live in holiness and honor—not in lustful passion like the pagans who do not know God and his ways." 1 Thessalonians 4:3-5 (NLT)

- Our thinking won't be clouded. We can evaluate our relationship more objectively.
- Our relationship won't be based on performance/comparison.
- We will be protected from heartache, disease, unwanted pregnancy, guilt, and shame.

4. We should pray about our dating relationships instead of worrying about them.

“Don't worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done. Then you will experience God's peace, which exceeds anything we can understand. His peace will guard your hearts and minds as you live in Christ Jesus.” Philippians 4:6-7 (NLT)

“Take delight in the LORD, and he will give you your heart's desires. Commit everything you do to the LORD. Trust him, and he will help you... The LORD directs the steps of the godly. He delights in every detail of their lives... Put your hope in the LORD. Travel steadily along his path. He will honor you...”
Psalm 37:4-5, 23, 34a (NLT)

5. We should remember that we are new creations through Christ Jesus no matter who we are or what we've done.

“...anyone who belongs to Christ has become a new person. The old life is gone; a new life has begun!”
2 Corinthians 5:17 (NLT)

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Connect Group Questions

Read 1 Corinthians 7:7-8, & 32-35 & Matthew 22:37-38. Then discuss the following questions:

1. If you could travel back in time and give yourself one piece of dating advice on your 16th birthday, what would it be?
2. In your opinion, what are the biggest differences between the way the Bible and our culture define singleness and marriage?
3. Discuss the following three reasons to abstain from sex while we're dating: (1 Thessalonians 4:3-5)
 - Our thinking will not be clouded. We can evaluate our relationship more objectively.
 - Our relationship will not be based on performance/comparison.
 - We will be protected from heartache, disease, unwanted pregnancy, guilt, and shame.

Are these reasons still relevant for Christians dating in 2022?

4. In 2 Corinthians 6:14-16, Paul warns Christians not to become “unequally yoked” with non-believers? What do you think this means? How does this apply to dating and/or marriage?
5. If God knows us completely, why doesn't He stop us from dating the wrong people?
6. Discuss the following verses:

“Don't worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need and thank him for all he has done. Then you will experience God's peace, which exceeds anything we can understand. His peace will guard your hearts and minds as you live in Christ Jesus.” Philippians 4:6-7 (NLT)

“Charm is deceptive, and beauty does not last; but a woman who fears the Lord will be greatly praised.”
Proverbs 31:30 (NLT)

“The man who finds a wife finds a treasure, and he receives favor from the Lord.” Proverbs 18:22 (NLT)

Resources:

Boundaries in Dating, by Dr. Henry Cloud, Dr. John Townsend, Zondervan, 2000.

Preparing Your Child for Dating, by Dr. Bob Barnes, Zondervan Publishing, 1998.