

Part One - Sex, Marriage & Singleness

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[0 : 00] Let me pray for us then, if we're all in possession of a pen and a handout. Let's pray.

Heavenly Father, we do want to ask now for your help and your blessing as we look together at your words. We pray, please, that you would help us to listen, to concentrate, to learn together from your word.

And we pray that you might teach us. We long, Lord, not just to grow in our knowledge, but also in our love of you and our eagerness to follow you. So we pray that you'd be at work by your spirit, moving our hearts to love and trust you even more deeply than we do already.

In Jesus name. Amen. Now, my plan is over these next at least three Sunday evenings, I think it will just be three Sunday evenings, to take a closer look at 1 Corinthians chapter 7 and a little bit of chapter 6 as well, in a bit more detail to see how it applies to marriage, sex and singleness or sex, marriage and singleness.

And we'll do it in that in that order. And I want to read the whole chapter to you this evening. And so we're going to get a little bit of an overview. And I have printed out the whole chapter on your handout, which is why it's so long, so that you can scribble along on it and make some notes and questions in the margins.

[1 : 21] And hopefully we'll cover some of those in the weeks to come. But really, my purpose here is, I mean, there are a few things. I want us to deal with these things because I think these are really important topics for us.

A number of people at church have asked that we would talk more about these things. But also, I want to show you that actually, it doesn't really take a huge amount of effort to see how what is written here in 1 Corinthians 7 is really highly applicable to the situations and circumstances that we find ourselves in today.

God's word, we don't have to work that hard to make God's word relevant. Actually, we read and open God's word and find that it is itself relevant to us. Now, that doesn't mean that there's a straight line between our situation and the situation in Corinth.

And so before I read it, let me try and give you a little bit of background detail for you. If you look down at the opening words of chapter 7, you see that Paul says, now about the matters you wrote about.

And in a way that sort of works as a headline to chapter 7 and some of the chapters to follow and kind of hints at the background. So the setting of 1 Corinthians is that the church in Corinth was planted by Paul, who was there for about 18 months preaching and teaching.

[2 : 37] And then he left and he wrote them a letter. So in chapter 5, verse 9, he refers to a letter that he wrote to them. It seems then in response to his letter to them, they write a report back to him, which comes from Chloe's people, as it's referred to in chapter 1.

And by all accounts, the report that he gets back from Corinth is a really bad one, right? The situation in the church is really bad. There's lots of terrible things going on in the church. And Paul spends sort of the opening six chapters of his letter sort of restating his authority and trying to reset some of the misunderstandings that the church has.

And then in chapter 7, he starts what essentially is a new section by responding to the questions that they've raised in their letter to him. So really, in your Bible, like 1 Corinthians is really, I suppose, 2 Corinthians.

We don't really have 1 Corinthians because we don't have Paul's original letter and we don't have their response to it. But what we have in 1 Corinthians really is sort of like one side of a phone call. So you are hearing Paul's response to their questions, but we don't have their questions except when Paul states them to us, which means that we do have to do a little bit of work and we need to

be cautious in some ways as we interpret the chapter.

[3 : 51] But it also means that means that you will meet in 1 Corinthians 7 several different groups of people who have their own questions and their own comments and their own situations. So you meet, let me just run through them really quickly.

You will meet some married people in verses 2 to 6, but married people who are seemingly in sexless marriages and Paul addresses them. Then you meet some single people, both those who've never married and those whose partners have died.

You then meet the unhappily married. Then you meet those in marriages where one partner is a believer and the other isn't. You will then meet some people who are perpetually discontent with their status, whether that's their marriage status or their single status.

Then you meet those who've never married or those who are thinking about marriage, some engaged to be married. And what's really fascinating, I think, for our purposes this evening and really the thinking behind tonight is that Paul thinks the best way of dealing with all of those groups of people is to address them together, not separating them out.

You see, I think you or I might suggest that we say, let's run a married person's seminar, right? And then let's run a young person's seminar and let's run another one for single people and let's run another one for widows or widowers.

[5 : 11] Now that's not necessarily a bad idea, but Paul's assumption here is that all these people in the church should be addressed together. Why is that? I think that is because the assumption that Paul is making in this chapter, and it's the assumption of the New Testament, is that you and I need one another's help to live the Christian life.

And you need the help not just from people who are like you and in your situation, but you need help from others who are not like you and are not in your situation. So the church is intended to be a community of faith where people help one another.

And it doesn't matter what your marriage status is. It doesn't matter what your situation is at home. You will need one another's help to live the Christian life. And so you know, don't you, that you need to understand how the Bible applies not only to you, but to others around you, so that you may speak with wisdom and grace into different people's situations.

I think probably one of the most unhelpful things in church is the stupid things that married people say to single people, or the stupid assumptions that single people make of married people. You know, so it is easy, isn't it, to assume that your situation is more difficult than anybody else's, or for you to assume that there are simple solutions to the challenges that people face.

And knowing 1 Corinthians 7 and knowing how that applies to people who are not in your situation is really helpful at stopping us saying stupid things to people. Instead, we will be able to say Bible things and be able to encourage one another.

[6 : 36] And so each of us, whatever our situation, whatever our age, need a thoughtful, biblical view of sex, marriage and singleness, if our church is going to flourish, because we're going to need one another's help in that, as we were thinking this morning.

So with that in mind, let me read 1 Corinthians chapter 6, verse 12, down to chapter 7, verse 40.

And I'm not going to read it terribly slowly, but also hopefully not so fast that you can't track along, but do scribble on it.

Because what I'm going to ask you at the end, with the person sat next to you, is you to identify things that you found surprising or shocking, and things that immediately jump out as you are things you don't understand.

Okay, we used to call it in our Bible study group shockers and blockers right stuff at all. That's surprising and I don't understand that. So maybe you want to want to scribble in the margin at things that jump out at you in that way.

And then we'll talk about them at the end. Okay. So 2 Corinthians 6 verse 12. I have the right to do anything you say, but not everything is beneficial.

[7 : 39] I have the right to do anything but I will not be mastered by anything. You say food for the stomach and stomach for the food, and God will destroy them both.

The body, however, is not meant for sexual immorality, but for the Lord and the Lord for the body. By his power, God raised the Lord from the dead and he will raise us also.

Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ himself? Shall I then take the members of Christ and unite them with a prostitute? Never. Do you not know that he who unites himself with a

prostitute is one with her in his body?

For it is said the two will become one flesh. But whoever is united with the Lord is one with him in spirit. Flee from sexual immorality. All other sins a person commits are outside the body.

But whoever sins sexually sins against their own body. Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own. [8 : 39] You were bought at a price. Therefore, honor God with your bodies. Now for the matters you wrote about. It is good for a man not to have sexual relations with a woman.

But since sexual immorality is occurring, each man should have sexual relations with his own wife and each woman with her own husband. The husband should fulfill his marital duty to his wife and likewise the wife to her husband.

The wife does not have authority over her own body, but yields it to her husband. In the same way, the husband does not have authority over his own body, but yields it to his wife.

Do not deprive each other, perhaps by mutual consent for a time, so that you may devote yourselves to prayer. Then come together again so that Satan will not tempt you because of your lack of self-control.

I say this is a concession, not as a command. I wish that all of you were as I am, but each of you has your own gift from God. One has this gift.

[9 : 42] Another has that. Now to the unmarried and the widows, I say it is good for them to stay unmarried as I do. But if they cannot control themselves, they should marry for it is better to marry than to burn with passion.

To the married, I give this command, not I, but the Lord. A wife must not separate from her husband. But if she does, she must remain unmarried or else be reconciled to her husband.

And a husband must not divorce his wife. To the rest, I say this, I, not the Lord. If any brother has a wife who is not a believer and she is willing to live with him, he must not divorce her.

And if a woman has a husband who is not a believer and he is willing to live with her, she must not divorce him. But the unbelieving husband has been sanctified through his wife. And the unbelieving wife has been sanctified through her believing husband.

Otherwise your children would be unclean. But as it is, they are holy. But if the, if no one's writing down a blocker by that words, I don't know whether you're really listening. But if the unbeliever leaves, let it be so.

[10 : 49] The brother or sister is not bound in such circumstances. God has called us to live in peace. How do you know, wife, whether you will save your husband? Or how do you know, husband, whether you will save your wife?

Nevertheless, each person should live as a believer in whatever situation the Lord has assigned to them. Just as God has called them. This is the rule I lay down in all the churches.

Was a man already circumcised when he was called? He should not become uncircumcised. Was a man uncircumcised when he was called? He should not be circumcised. Circumcision is nothing and uncircumcision is nothing.

Keeping God's commands is what counts. Each person should remain in the situation they were in when God called them. Were you a slave when you were called?

Don't let it trouble you. Although if you can gain your freedom, do so. For the one who is a slave when called to faith in the Lord is the Lord's freed person. Similarly, the one who is free when called is Christ's slave.

[11 : 51] You are bought at a price. Do not become slaves of human beings. Brothers and sisters, each person as responsible to God should remain in the situation they were in when God called them.

Now about virgins. Without virgins, I have no command from the Lord, but I give judgment as one who by the Lord's mercy is trustworthy. Because of the present crisis, I think it is good for a man to remain as he is.

Are you pledged to a woman? Do not seek to be released. Are you free from such a commitment? Do not look for a wife. Do not want a wife. But if you do marry, you have not sinned. And if a virgin marries, she has not sinned.

But those who marry will face many troubles in this life. And I want to spare you this. you this. What I mean, brothers and sisters, is that the time is short. From now on, those who have wives should live as if they do not, those who mourn as if they did not, those who are happy as if they were not,

those who buy something as if it were not theirs to keep, those who use the things of the world as if not engrossed in them, but this world in its present form is passing away.

I would like you to be free from concern. An unmarried man is concerned about the Lord's affairs, how he can please the Lord, but a married man is concerned about the affairs of this world, how he can please his wife, and his interests are divided. An unmarried woman or virgin is concerned about the Lord's affairs, her aim is to be devoted to the Lord in both body and spirit, but a married woman is concerned about the affairs of this world, how she can please her husband. I'm saying this for your own good, not to restrict you, but that you may live in a right way in undivided devotion to the Lord. If anyone is worried that he might not be acting honorably towards the virgin he is engaged to, and if his passions are too strong and he feels he ought to marry, he should do as he wants. He is not sinning, he should get married. But the man who has settled the matter in his own mind, who is under no compulsion, but has control over his will, and who has made up his mind not to marry the virgin, this man also does the right thing. So then he who marries the virgin does right, but he who does not marry her does better. A woman is bound to her husband as long as he lives, but if her husband dies, she is free to marry anyone she wishes, but he must belong to the Lord. In my judgment, she is happier if she stays as she is, and I think that I too have the Spirit of God.

[14:26] Okay, with the person next to you, just go for things that are surprising and things that are confusing. And if you can't find anything, you can sit there and talk about something completely different. Go for it.

So I'm going to write these down. We're not going to necessarily talk about all of them tonight. See, this is not me promising to answer every question that you've got from 1 Corinthians 6 and 7, but we might deal with some of them tonight, and we'll deal with some of them in weeks to come, and others of them we might just never deal with, so prepare yourself for disappointment. But anyway, shockers and blockers, things that we found surprising, things that we found confusing. Anyone want to start us off? The idea of undivided devotion belongs just to the single person. Right, okay, yes, yes. So the undivided devotion of the single person. And is that possible as a married person? Is that the question? Yeah.

Yeah. Yeah. Great. Anybody else? I can't remember where exactly it is in the past, but I did remember someone mentioning me a long time, but basically if, say like a married couple sadly do end up for the water, that either one of them should not remarry, but if they ever do remarry, they go back to the same person.

[16:08] Okay. I might have that wrong, but that's the interpretation someone gave me. Great. So there's a question. So it does mention divorce, and it does seem to mention marriage again for people who've been married before, who are widows or widowers. Yeah. So there's a question there, isn't there, about what about divorce and remarriage?

Yeah. Good question. Yeah. I'm not going to answer it. Not tonight, but yes. Yeah. In verse 14, when it talks about the unbelieving person who's sanctified through his wife, Yeah.

Yeah. What does it mean to be sanctified through your husband or wife? Yeah. I mean, just so that we don't end up wandering away thinking heresy, it does say verse 16 as well, how do you know wife whether you will save your husband or how do you know husband whether you'll save your wife?

So it's not, he is not thinking of another route of salvation, either trust in Jesus or get married to a Christian. Those are your two options. No, so it's not that book. So then the question is, what does it mean to be made holy or sanctified by marriage?

And then what does it mean for your children to be holy as well? Yeah. Good question. Okay. And the question is, is that like surprising? Or we are going to talk a bit about that tonight.

[17:33] Self-control in verses eight and nine. Okay. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah.

Yeah. Yeah. Yeah.

Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. So the marriage of a believer and a non-believer, it seems to be, doesn't it, from the end of the chapter, that he is very clear that if you are looking to get marriage, you should marry another Christian, right?

So that seems to be really clear, doesn't it? So verse 39, if her husband dies, she is free to marry anyone she wishes, but he must belong to the Lord. Right. But then there seems to be in the chapter, at least the experience of the Corinthian church is that there are believers married to unbelievers.

So presumably that is because they were both unbelievers when they got married and one of them has become a Christian, the other hasn't. But yes. But then there are questions about that and how that works out. Yeah. Great.

[18 : 51] Other questions? Yeah. So what does it mean to live as if you're not? Yes. As if you're not married, as if you're not mourning, as if you're not got anything. Yeah.

Yeah. In verses 29 to 31. Yeah. One of the things that we will come against in this chapter is that actually our, our view of the present is shaped massively by what we believe will happen in the future with the return of the Lord Jesus.

Right. If so. Yeah, no, I will say this. Right. So I was just trying to work out what we're going to say in weeks to come. But it's interesting that our doctrine and understanding of marriage, sex and singleness is shaped not just by creation, but is shaped also by redemption.

Yeah. So if we just had creation and no full sin and redemption, then everyone should get married and everyone should have as many children as possible.

Right. Because that's fill the world and subdue it. But redemption and God's plan of redemption, that all people everywhere will hear the gospel.

[20 : 02] that actually sort of trumps over the creation mandate. And so there is a, a new priority in marriage, sex and singleness that is given by the story of redemption that isn't just there in the story of creation.

More of that to come. Yes. Yeah. So Jesus echoes that kind of you as well. Yeah. And we will come to that in.

Please come. Any others just briefly? Yeah. Go on. Can I quickly explain verse 24? Remaining in the situation is there when God called them. Yeah.

No, I don't know. Explain it, but we will look at it. If we come. Yeah. Yeah. So, yeah. And there seems to be in that whole section, doesn't there? Not just about marriage and singleness, but also about circumcision and uncircumcision, slave or free, about not trying to change our circumstance, but a confidence that God has been sovereign over all of that.

It does mention about, what you call gain, statuses of freedom. Yes. Availing yourself of your freedom. Yes. Is that an absolute in each case? No. And it's definitely not a commendation of slavery as well.

[21 : 24] And we will, and we will talk about that. Yeah. Okay. Go on. What is the present crisis in verse 26? What is the present crisis in verse 26?

Yes. Yes. So, is the present crisis in verse 26, is that just because we're living in the light of the Lord's return?

Or is there something going on in Corinth in the present crisis? What is that? And how should that shape our understanding? Yeah. Good question.

Also, I guess, like, are there other reasons you should get married other than just, you know, passion? Are there other reasons to get married other than just passion?

Yes. That's a good question. And we will come to that too. Okay. Let me try and work through really quickly some of the passages teaching on sex. And then we'll pick up some of these other things in weeks to come.

[22 : 20] Now, I want to say, basically, I think that you've got two errors and three truths about sex. So, let's try and deal with them reasonably quickly.

You can ask me more questions at the end. We've got about eight minutes. It seems, doesn't it, that the false view about sex is that sex doesn't matter.

That's the first one in chapter six. So, this idea of food for the stomach and the stomach for food and God will destroy them both, they're not really talking about food. They're talking about sex, right?

So, it's as if their bodies are totally separate from their spirituality. So, that it doesn't really matter to them what they do with their bodies because that's not really who they are.

And so, they can, you know, if they desire sex, they can have sex. It's as if it's no big deal. And Paul tells them that they are wrong. He says to them that their body is not meant for sexual immorality, but is meant for the Lord and the Lord for the body.

[23 : 19] In other words, it does matter, says Paul, what you do with your bodies. We believe in a risen savior who is not just about saving your spiritual soul or whatever that might be, but is saving your body.

He will resurrect you. You will meet the Lord Jesus in your body as you meet him in his resurrection body. And in fact, he says, sex is very significant because it is the uniting of your body with another. And that shouldn't be taken lightly. Interestingly, in chapter 6, Paul is super clear that Jesus is saving our bodies and we belong to him because we are bought with a price.

And so, we are, verse 18, to flee all sexual immorality. Sexual immorality in verse 18 is the Greek word *porneia*, which is a catch-all word in the Bible for all sexual activity outside of the marriage of one man to one woman.

And so, we are to flee all sexual activity outside of the marriage of one man to one woman. That's Paul in verse 18. Yes, yeah, tying into some of the stuff we're looking at in reading.

[24 : 30] False view number two is then that sex is always wrong. Now, it seems to me there's another view, doesn't there? Beginning of chapter 7, where Paul says that they wrote in their letter, it is good for a man not to have sexual relations with a woman.

And the point here is they're saying it's not that they're talking about any man and any woman, but they're talking about a husband and a wife. It seems here that this same kind of thinking in chapter 6 has taken root in the church, but in a slightly different way.

So, the idea here is not just that you're separate from your body, so it doesn't matter what your body does. It's the idea that you're separate from your body because your body is dirty, and so it is always bad.

Right? And so, they're not saying it doesn't matter what you do with it. They're saying it matters really a lot, and so therefore sex is bad because it's a bodily thing. And so, they say that sex shouldn't be indulged in any circumstances, even in marriage.

So, they are teaching married people not to have sex. And Paul tells them that they are wrong too. In fact, says Paul, sex in marriage is a good thing, a right thing, and to teach otherwise is to contradict the Bible.

[25 : 36] So, chapter 7, verse 2. Since sexual immorality is occurring, each man should have sexual relations with his own wife, and each woman with her own husband. The husband should fulfill his marital duty to his wife, and likewise the wife to her husband.

The wife does not have authority over her own body, but yields it to her husband. In the same way, the husband does not have authority over his own body, but yields it to his wife. Do not deprive each other, except perhaps by mutual consent and for a time, so that you may devote yourselves to prayer.

Then come together again, so that Satan will not tempt you because of your lack of self-control. It seems, doesn't it, that sex in marriage is a good thing, and it is not to be rejected.

And so, those are the two false views of sex, which are rejected by Paul. Now, let's look at the right views. Number one, sex is made for marriage.

Really important, right? The way around that is. Okay? Sex is made for marriage, not marriage made for sex. Okay? I think if you were to ask people outside of the church what they thought the Bible said about sex, they would probably tell you that, oh, it's got a very negative view.

[26 : 46] God is very anti-sex. Right? God probably just tolerates it for the purposes of reproduction only. And God designs marriage in some way to frustrate people's sexual desire and to kind of police it.

Almost as if when, you know, God made man and woman, he was surprised by how strong their sexual desire was and sort of designed marriage subsequently to try and keep it under control. But that's not the way around it is, is it? Paul says it's the opposite way around. In God's view, the intimacy of sex and the desire for sex was designed by him for the purposes of solidifying marriage promises.

Sex in marriage is not just for the purpose of having children, but for the purpose of building the marriage covenant. Perhaps you could put it this way. Sexual desire is designed by God to be strong because he designed marriage promises to be strong.

The problem, therefore, in the world is not the strength of sexual desire, but the uncoupling of sexual desire from marriage faithfulness. It is sinful people like us who misdirect our sexual desires and damage marriages and those around us.

[28 : 00] I don't think I need to spell out all the applications of that this evening and you can go and work it out yourself. But needless to say, that Paul says that while married couples might choose for a time and for the purpose of prayer to refrain from sex, still that should not be the pattern of married life because sex is given to marriage for the purpose of building, solidifying and cementing

marriage promises.

Sex is made for marriage. Right view number two, sex is self-giving. Here I want you just to notice Paul's radical point is that sex in marriage is focused on the other person.

This would have been astonishing to the church in Corinth. In a city that is focused on its own pleasure and in a culture obsessed with sex and its own satisfaction, Paul turns the tables, doesn't he?

Telling them that it's not about the husband or wife demanding sex, but about the giving of oneself to another. Sex in marriage is serving the other. The husband is to give himself. The wife is to give herself.

The NIV translates it as marital duty in verse three. I don't think that's great. The older translations translate it as conjugal rights, which I don't think is even much better. I'm probably not really sure what it means.

[29 : 12] Here, really the idea is debt, that the husband's body is indebted to his wife and vice versa. And the emphasis then is not on demands and rights, but on giving and serving.

So that sex is to be other person-centered. Now, if that was counter-cultural in Corinth, it certainly is today, isn't it? The idea of sex being the way that husband and wife serve one another and are generous to one another is very odd.

But it's captured in the marriage vows, isn't it? A husband and a wife, they say to one another, with my body, I honor you. All that I am, I give to you. Thirdly and finally, right view number three, disordered sexual desire is experienced by everyone and should be controlled.

I want you to notice this as we finish off. Paul makes a massive assumption here that since the fall, all of our sexual desires, whether you are married or whether you are single, are disordered.

That we cannot be trusted to only ever have right and godly sexual desires. The husband and wife in marriage will experience inappropriate sexual desire that they will find difficult to control.

[30 : 31] Sex in marriage is designed to help them with that, but it will not eliminate that. The unmarried and the widows in verses eight and nine will experience strong sexual desire that will be hard to control. And that comes up again later on in the chapter.

Here it seems, we're going to talk more about this in weeks to come. It's that the unmarried couple who are ashamed of what they're doing are supposed to get married as well, I think. That seems to be, I think, what burning with passion is, is that they are ashamed.

Because they are indulging in sexual behavior that really is reserved for marriage. And so Paul recommends marriage for them in that situation. And here's the point then.

Disordered sexual desire is not just the struggle of one small group of people in the life of the church. It's the struggle of all of us. And in fact, that is really to be expected, isn't it?

If sexual desire is one of the strongest human emotions that we experience, then we would expect as sinful, fallen, broken people for sexual temptations to be one of the most powerful temptations that we face.

[31 : 34] And that just stands to reason. And in that case, in a world like that, two things come out of 1 Corinthians 7. One is a really high view of marriage. That seems to be what the chapter is recommending consistently in a world of disordered sexual desire, is to have a high view of marriage.

How does Paul, in this church plant, in a situation like Corinth, how does he go about sorting it out and helping people through that? He has a really high view of marriage.

Get married. Marriage is given by God for our good. Get married. Right. Sex is designed for marriage. And so the antidote, if you like, to disordered sexual desire is rightly ordered sexual desire.

But the second thing that comes through is not just a high view of marriage, but also a really high view of self-control. Paul is not suggesting that sexual desire cannot be controlled. He's realistic about its strength.

But still, and we'll see more of this in weeks to come, he still is able to recommend singleness, isn't he? And he thinks that in the light of the gospel and in the light of the return of the Lord Jesus, singleness has a lot to commend it.

[32 : 45] It seems to be almost in verse 20. Is it 28 or 29? 28. It's many troubles in this life.

It seems almost as if he is suggesting that the desire for self-control with our sexual desires in singleness is that that suffering is less than the suffering of marriage.

Right. Because he suggests that actually the trouble of singleness is less than the trouble of marriage. Maybe you disagree with him. But actually, that's, I think, what he is suggesting in verse 28.

He does that because he thinks it is possible for Christians to control sexual desire. We do not have to be victims of our sexual desire or passengers to our sexual desires because the Christian, in the strength of the spirit, can exercise self-control and can also have their desires reshaped and reordered by the God who loves them and is working in them.

That is a really, really whistle-stop tour of what is said about sex. And we're going to return to some of it in weeks to come. But any questions or comments as I finish?

[34 : 06] Would you encourage young Christian men to desire marriage? Because it seems like there's a lot of different use there. Yes. That's a really good question, Seth. Would you encourage Christian men or Christian women to seek marriage?

Yes, I think that the chapter says that it is not wrong. We need to keep the balance of the passage, don't we? We don't need to just read some of the verses and not all of the verses.

It is right to want to be married. It is not wrong to desire marriage. But you also need to recognize that you're not actually suffering over that, are you?

So he talks about one people having one gift and one having another gift in verse 7. And it may seem to you that your singleness, if you're single, is not a gift. It may seem to you that your marriage, if it's difficult, is not a gift.

But actually, the Lord is sovereign over the situation that we're in and we're to use it for his glory. So it's not wrong to want to be married, but you need to marry a believer.

[35 : 12] Which I think means that you need to ask the Lord to train your heart to be attracted to godliness. Yes. Yeah. It is a good thing.

People who make vows of celibacy, this can cause some problems later on. I mean, it's very difficult to anticipate how you will be in the future. Yeah. Yeah. I remember there was an Anglican, a vicar that came to have a meal with my wife and myself.

I remember that. And he said that we didn't sort down this and this is what we wish. Right. Yeah. Yeah. There's a sense of wisdom. Yes.

So vows of celibacy. I think, yes, it's difficult to anticipate how you will feel later on. I think that's really helpful, Mike, because I think the passage is quite clear. And I think Paul talks about this in other places as well, about just being very cautious about making those kind of promises.

You might be single today, but don't necessarily promise that that's going to be the situation forever. Yeah. Yeah. I think I have one more.

[36 : 17] I'll wait for someone else. It's fine. You wait for someone else then, Seth, and then me. Anybody else? Go on, Seth. All right. So, this is my last one.

What would you say to a young man that's a long-term, 20-year Christian to be around witnessing tons of different marriages in the church that have been, got robbed, divorces, and a bit of evangelist and a warrior that marriage, for what you see, will still exist?

Okay. Okay. So, gosh. I mean, this is like a kind of... Casey, I feel like you're asking me a trick question, Seth, as well.

No, I'm not sure. I'm not sure. I'm not sure. I'm not sure. I'm not sure. Yeah. So, I think it's right, isn't it? As a single person, to look around churches and see that actually marriage is difficult and not all marriages are great, it's not a bad thing to be honest about and to see, is it?

I think that's one of the lies of the church, is that you can look at people think that marriage is the solution to everybody's problems. And it's really not. Marriage is really difficult. And it can be, you know, the pain of being in a difficult marriage is really, really hard, isn't it?

[37 : 28] And it is really awful for those in that situation. And actually, I think lots of our single people will probably be helped by saying that actually marriage isn't the solution to all of the problems and struggles that they face.

And Paul is really honest about that. Yeah. And yet still, it is not wrong also as a single person to want to be married, to pray that the Lord would provide you with somebody, to seek out somebody. Those are not wrong things to do. In fact, it's right to marry us. And it's also right to remain single. It's very spiritually healthy because you're actually in proximity with somebody in a way that you haven't been otherwise.

Yeah. You affect yourself. Yeah. Yeah. And so it's quite the actual, some people have problems precisely because of the fear of that.

Yeah. And some people, as you say, they think that it's going to be, once they get past the winning ceremony, it's going to be sorted. Yeah. And in actual fact, living closely with something like that is, you've got to work out how to deal with differences of opinion and all sorts of things.

[38 : 33] Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. So it's kind of. Yeah. Yeah. It is a challenge. What was your answer on the peace? On the, the answer on the peace.

What, how would he keep his peace? Well, I would say, I would suggest that at the very best, they're just reflecting verse 28, aren't they? And, and so they're right.

Right. But that doesn't necessarily mean that marriage is always necessarily wrong. And I, I think if the Lord, yeah, I don't want to be too sort of, sort of fatalistic about it, but if the Lord wants you to be married, he will provide you with someone to be married to.

So don't be kind of tied up in a knot about a hypothetical situation, which you're not in. Yeah. Yeah. Great. We need to end.

It would seem to me that Biblically God intended man, it's not good for man to be by himself. He created the woman. It is a sense in which our fullness has been attracted to what God intended man.

[39 : 46] So it's not good for man to be alone in Genesis 2. Yes. I agree, but that's not the whole story because of redemption.

And so I think what Paul is doing here is he's overshadowing just that creation story with the redemption story as well. Okay. Thanks. Let's pray as we finish.

Let's pray. Heavenly Father, we, we know that we find it really, really difficult. It's difficult to trust and live out what you say about marriage and sex and singleness.

These things relate to and connect with some of our deepest desires, our deepest wounds. And our greatest struggles.

And Lord, we, we want to pray that the fruit of looking at this chapter would not be discontentment or lack of peace or trouble, but might be a deeper trust in you and your goodness and your mercy to us.

[40 : 55] We thank you, Lord, that one day, everything that's really good about marriage will belong to all of us in our relationship with Jesus. That the great wedding day is a day still to come.

A day when we will be with you and see the Lord Jesus. And relate to you in such a way that all the closeness and intimacy of marriage is ours forever, eternally in our relationship with you.

And Lord, we long for that day. And in the midst of our struggles, maybe in difficult marriages or maybe in unwanted singleness, we pray, please, that you would keep our eyes fixed on Jesus, who loves us perfectly and who one day we will be with.

And so we pray in joy in his name. Amen. Amen. Thanks, everybody.