

Unpacking the Preach

Date Sunday 19th September 2021
Sermon Title Discipleship: Singleness
Bible Passage 1 Corinthians 7

Introduction

Take time to read the passage again and reflect whether there are any new or different things that the scriptures have spoken to you about?

Recapping the preach

Nick spoke about whether through experience of singleness and marriage, his understanding of Paul's (and Jesus in Matthew CH19) words that 'it is good for a man not to marry' had changed?

Paul speaks of much immorality (v1) in Corinth being the reason why people should marry, yet doesn't suggest that by being married sexual sin will be avoided or overcome because of it. Both singleness and marriage is a gift (v7) yet singleness doesn't have attached to it the responsibilities of a wife and family that can disable concern about the Lord's affairs (v32)

Nick highlights the 9 times 'to call' or 'be called' is used in the passage, which suggest the primary call isn't to singleness or marriage but to our original calling in Christ – our conversion and staying connected to our first love – Jesus Christ. The church has elevated marriage over singleness and created unwarranted pressure to reach the 'pinnacle' of discipleship, thus moving from our identity being found in Christ, to being found in status.

Christians are the bride of Christ, he is the groom – so we are already married to the LORD – who is our first love, so unless we can't accept the gift of being single, that Jesus speaks of to his disciples in Matthew ch19, we are to keep that marriage to Christ as our no.1 focus by staying single.

The reason all single Christians are single, isn't because they are all waiting for the 'right' person. Nick listed 4 other reasons including *Choice, Circumstance, Personality/lack of skills & Teaching in church*, that the church should educate itself in, so as to avoid the unhealthy view of their brothers and sisters singleness, that it maybe embraced,

applauded and encouraged in the work of Christ and the growth of God's church.

Nick emphasised the calling we have to be disciples first and foremost, wherever we are and whatever our status is, stay in that place and be a witness to Christ's transforming nature, until or if he gives you the gift of marriage.

- **Questions for reflection**

- Have your life experiences led you to change in any way the way you feel about/understand being single and Paul's call not to marry?
- How do you think your attitude towards singleness and marriage has been shaped?...has Church teaching, Society, Culture influenced you in any way?
- What kind of church language, scripture or tradition could have aided this influence? (Gen 2:18 for example)
- From personal experience, what would you say is the hardest part of being a disciple when single, or indeed married?
- Has/Does the church support you in this?
- In light of this, if you have children in your family, has this made you think about your influence on them with regards to their future marital status? – is your approach Kingdom focused?
- To really know what it's like to be human, wouldn't it have been better for Jesus to have been married and had children of his own?

- **Going Deeper**

- **Read 1 Corinthians 12:21-26**

- **Now read this excerpt from an open letter to a church on Singleness in 2019;**

"The world already tells singles that they are in need of companionship through sitcoms, novels, movies, advertising, and dating apps. Singles' relational state is viewed as an unfortunate period that can only be satisfied by a relationship or a hook-up. The Church should be the one place in this world that uplifts and empowers single people as content children of God. Singles have the satisfaction of knowing Christ just as much as

those who are dating and married, though the Church has been prone to addressing them in a similar manner that they are addressed in the world: as people lacking something.”

- Q: What are your initial feelings towards the excerpt in light of the passage? Are there any things here we need as a church to address? Does the passage even relate at all to the issues raised in the excerpt?

Response

- Focus our identity on being a disciple of Christ rather than our status.
- Encourage the single life for those who are single.
- Be attentive to how we as church ‘deal’ with all singles, whether always single, widowed, separated or divorced.

Prayer pointers

- **For no division in the body, that each would have equal concern for each other.**
- **Wisdom and discernment in the language we use in our relationships with the young single folk.**

Additional resources:

If you need some additional resources the below websites are useful:

- <https://www.gotquestions.org>
- <https://enduringword.com>
- <https://www.biblica.com>
- <https://biblehub.com/commentaries/>