

XVII. God's Blueprint in Biblical Perspective
Foundations From Genesis
"Biblical Masculinity and Femininity and Singleness – Part 2"
I Corinthians 7
Dr. Harry L. Reeder III
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In this series we are building the foundations in life which give us a Biblical world and life view that are Christ-centered, Biblically framed and Spirit empowered, in a culture of insanity, absurdity, lethality, immorality and all rooted in profitability, with the clarity of God's Word in the midst of all these jagged edges. In this series we have already looked at the sanctity of creation, Divine revelation, life, the Lord's Day and we are anticipating our studies on the sanctity of marriage and family. We are currently looking at the sanctity of gender – male and female.

We have been looking at a Biblical view of gender that is rooted in the book of Genesis. God has made man – male and female – to image Him, but the fullness of His image has been granted with clarity by the creation of male and female. On the one hand there is overlap as both bear the image of God but there is also distinction as we examined masculinity and femininity in creation. Then the fall brought a toxic effect on both masculinity and femininity so then we looked at redemption, where God saves us and breaks the power of sin as well as forgives the guilt of sin. Therefore, brings to us in redemption a Biblical masculinity and Biblical femininity which rightly goes into what we call Christian manhood and Christian womanhood. This is not the stereotypical projections of the culture in reaction or its chaos or trying to get order from simply tradition, but we have looked at what a Christian man is and does and for the Christian woman as well. Then we moved to how that lands in the spheres of life whereby we live.

This is where we are now looking at what a Christian man and Christian woman look like in singleness, in marriage, in family, in parenting, in the body of Christ – the church – as men of God and women of God. As we look at this, we are also looking at how we are to be and live as Christian men and Christian women in the world itself. In all these spheres of life we go to God's Word to get our direction, to get a theological perspective. In other words, we want a theology of singleness to understand how a Christian man and a Christian woman who are living for the Lord, by the grace of God to the glory of God should live. This will take us into the theology of marriage, family, parenting, and the church as the Word of God helps us establish this. This is absolutely crucial to understand and embrace, that we need a theology of all these aspects of life.

How do I know how God evaluates my performance in life as a man/woman if I am in a state of singleness? To know this, we go to God's revealed will in His Word, which is where we go for everything in life. A God-centered view of life in responsibilities, relationships and the use of resources requires us to know how God views it, frames it and evaluates it in the way we live. R. C Sproul would use the Latin phrase *coram deo* which means 'in the presence of God' or living life under the eye of God and that's theology. All of life is lived under the eye of God and in all things God is glorified, Christ is preeminent and by the power of the Spirit of God all things in our lives are to be brought before God as statements of worship to the Lord. If you want to know the perspective of God then you must go to the Word of God whereby God gives you that framework of life, now and everlasting.

In other words, the tap root of the Christian life is to be sunk deep in the soil of Biblical truth. There is no non-theological arena of life. All of life/creation is here for the glory of God. As Abraham Kuyper, the Dutch theologian said “There is not one square inch in all of creation that God does not say ‘this is Mine.’” Now, how do I know to live as a steward as to what is His? How do you steward singleness, a marriage, a family, parenting, your relationships in the body of Christ? You have to put the tap root deep into the Word of God for its what nourishes the life of every single believer. The Bible gives us God’s prescription, description, what delights Him, what His desires are and what God commands. The Word of God is the only soil for the Spirit-directed tap root of the Christian life to be filled up to overflowing so we bear fruit, more fruit, and much fruit to the Lord.

This is what I do as a pastor. Whenever I come to an issue like this, I’m going to God’s Word for it’s infallible, inerrant, sufficient and supreme and I always look through four lenses from the Word of God – creation, fall, redemption, and consummation. As we look at singleness or any other sphere in life, the theology of it starts with creation, then fall, then redemption and then the consummation. Just to put on the table before we get into singleness I want you to know that in the new heavens and the new earth there is neither marriage or the giving in marriage. With the time we have left in this study I want to look at creation, fall and redemption in addressing the theology of singleness and I will look more at consummation in the next study.

Let’s get into our first text. Genesis 1:26-28 says [26] *Then God said, “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.”* [27] *So God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.*

[28] *And God blessed them. And God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth.”*

Both male and female are image bearers but to bear God’s image in the declaration of the Trinity is the necessity of God’s created hand in bringing forth male and female and then His benediction – And God blessed them. He followed this with the creation mandate for them. Now let’s look at Genesis 2.

Genesis 2:18 says [18] *Then the LORD God said, “It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him.”* I do not believe this is saying that something is missing if Adam is alone, relationally for if that is the case then I have no case to make for singles. While we are made for the human dynamic of relationships, the fullness of relationship and the sufficiency of God is affirmed throughout all of life. I believe the focus of this has to do with Adam alone could not fulfill the creation mandate – subdue the earth, have dominion and be fruitful and multiply. Adam appropriately was made from the dust of the ground because he is to subdue the earth and rule/dominion over it.

Genesis 2:19-23 says [19] *Now out of the ground the LORD God had formed every beast of the field and every bird of the heavens and brought them to the man to see what he would call them. And whatever the man called every living creature, that was its name. [20] The man gave names to all livestock and to the birds of the heavens and to every beast of the field. **But for Adam there was not found a helper fit for him.** [21] So the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and while he slept took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. [22] And the rib that the LORD God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man. [23] Then the man said, “This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my*

flesh; she shall be called Woman (isha – reflection of, out of), because she was taken out of Man (ish).”

Adam for him to have a suitable helper, out of his side, not the dust of the ground, comes the helper completer to get what is good done – the creation mandate. Here is a freebie in that so much for Darwinian evolution. We see Adam not only engaged in botany but he is naming the animals which not only shows his authority over them but he is defining them and as he defines them none fit along side of him to get the mandate done. It is impossible so note the sophistication of Adam mentally as well as the honesty of Adam functionally before the Lord. The woman is made and is made different yet equal. Together they bear the image of God and both will be necessary to accomplish the creation mandate. Then God provides a blessing for this heterosexual couple – this monogamous, conjugal, covenantal relationship and it’s marriage.

Genesis 2:24-25 says [24] *Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.* [25] *And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed.*

As I read this, I realize that marriage is not only a blessing to accomplish the creation mandate, but marriage becomes the prophetic picture of the redemptive mandate for I am speaking in reference to Christ and His bride, the church. Jesus, the Son of God, Son of Man, left His Father to cleave to His wife (the church) and purchase her at the cross, and from His side the blood flowed to redeem His bride who becomes joint heirs with Him – union with Christ. Nothing will bring a divorce in that marriage for nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus. We will dive further into this when we get to the study on the sanctity of marriage.

We see that as they are not ashamed in their nakedness thus the sexuality and intimacy of the one flesh relationship is shameless in the context of this marriage.

When I first began my ministry in the late 1970s as a student pastor, I had a mentor named Al Martin. In 1974, Al had done a series on singleness which I was able to listen to and what I am sharing with you now I first developed as a 25 year old student pastor just in seminary. I have only tried to refine it ever since. I’m grateful to Al for all his leadership and faithfulness throughout his life and ministry and for laying this all out for me.

So, let’s get into the theology of singleness by starting with creation. We have just read the creation account and have the sixth day of creation in the making of man as God’s image bearer to be the vice regent over all of His creation to fill it, subdue it and rule over it – male and female. In Genesis 2 we have what I call the biology microscope of man in creation. In my 10th grade biology class, we had to learn how to use the three prong microscope – the 10 power, 20 power, 30 power – so we go from the 10 power in Genesis 1 to the focus upon the sixth day in Genesis 2 and in it we begin to see the inner workings of man – male and female – in the context of the creation mandate being carried out.

The first thing we see from creation is that there is no perpetual singleness. There is absent any long term, continued singleness.

Two, we do see a temporary singleness. Temporarily Adam is single, he is by himself and it is not good for him to be alone under the mandates that God has given to him and there was a temporary singleness with Eve, although I don’t know to what degree, for the text says Eve was made from Adam and then brought to Adam. I believe it’s within the space of one day but it isn’t specific as to how long Adam is alone and Eve is alone as they are dwelling in the Garden. So, we have the temporary, preparatory singleness of Adam and the temporary, preparatory singleness of Eve.

This brings me to a third observation. I believe it is absolutely reasonable to assume without sin and without the fall perpetual singleness would not be present, it would be absent. I'm not making that a hard, fast statement. I'm tempted to but I don't know what God could have done if the holiness of Adam and Eve had continued, then they would have children where once again we would have temporary singleness. I do have enough information that in the context of creation that perpetual singleness would be absent and some form of temporary singleness would always be present.

I want to make a fourth and final observation. The desire for union, intimacy, interdependency, the blessings of the covenant of marriage is not sinful. Can it become sinful if it becomes an idol? Yes, but the desire is not sinful. If God says it's not good for the man to be alone and we see Adam's honest response when the woman was brought to him (something to the effect of 'what a woman!') then it's not sinful to desire the intimacy, interdependency and union within the covenant of marriage. It is not a statement that God is not enough but it is a statement that God has made us with that desire. This is not sinful unless it is elevated to the level of a god in our life. That's creation but it's not where we end.

We also have the fall into sin and with that comes the curse of sin which brings us to a doctrine we teach with thoughtfulness and carefulness – the doctrine of total depravity. This is not a doctrine of absolute depravity for we are not as sinful as we could be. Anything that you and I experience in the span of our life short of hell, is mixed with God's grace. We have had the work of common grace in our life if we're not in hell right now. We have experienced God's grace and mercy. What is meant by total depravity is that the curse of sin has affected us intellectually, emotionally, volitionally, relationally and it has penetrated and rendered us incapable of pleasing God without Him. Without Him we can do nothing to His glory. We need the work of common grace that restrains our sin and we need the work of redeeming grace that transforms a sinner so that instead of falling short of God's glory, we can give God glory.

While, it would be careless for me to assert as an axiom that perpetual singleness (extended, even lifetime singleness), would not have been found if we had not fallen into sin, I do believe that it is appropriate that I could assert that the direct causes of extended, perpetual singleness are found only because of the presence of sin. Sin has introduced this. I did not say that everyone in singleness is in punishment due to their sin. I said that singleness perpetual in this world is directly related to the consequences of the fall. I want to give you seven observations on this.

The first observation is that there are not enough men to go around for the women that are out there. Women are just kind of stuck with the 5 to 7 percent deficit of potential candidate in terms of live male bodies. Why? It is due to wars, sickness, and being more of the protector and provider there is greater mortality, but the good news is the rise of feminism and egalitarianism has closed the mortality gap. Women are dying a lot quicker now that women want to be men, but up until now men died quicker. Why do we have violence and war? It is because of sin and the result is that men get killed at a much higher rate than women. Men die quicker than women in this world because of the presence of sin.

The second observation, some do not marry simply out of sinful selfishness. They don't want to be responsible for anyone. They will be more than happy to be apart of the hook up culture in a motel room or they will be more than happy for you to bear yourself in shame so that they can engage in shame so that they can make another woman's body a playground and increasingly women also out of selfishness. Self-centered living has no time for a relationship that costs, such as marriage or the result of children to parent and prioritize in life. The curse of

sin brings self-centeredness, selfishness, self-exaltation and self-absorption. It is amazing what this has done to the “marriage rate” so that now in our country those without a covenant relationship without a spouse now are far into the majority within the country.

The third observation is sinful, social and relational habits. Sometimes a woman will look at a man and say ‘There is no way I can trust that man to love me and lead me for I see how he deals with other people.’ Or a man will say ‘there is no way I can trust that woman to be faithful to me as long as we both shall live.’ Sinful, social, relational habits begin to undermine selfish, unbelief, dominating behavior in men, a lack of purity and chastity in men and women and just the underbelly of immorality and the sinful, social habits that come from it.

The fourth observation is sinful fears. I can understand why. As a pastor I have come to realize I very seldom sit down with people in pastoral ministry and discipleship that they haven’t come from varying degrees of horror stories in family life, broken homes. God’s grace is sufficient. Many people are afraid to get married just by looking at the family they were raised in and the marriage from where they were born. I got married when I was 20. I found Cindy by God’s providence. I dated her for three months and then asked her to marry me and somehow she said ‘yes.’ Then we were engaged for three months and people have said to me ‘that was quick wasn’t it?’ My response is ‘it wasn’t quick enough for me.’ I still left a lot of room for her to change her mind and that would have been devastating. I will tell you one of the things that drew me to her. My life was completely undone. It was empty, ungodly, profane, violent and I had numerous addictions. I saw something in her and that brought me to Christ. I saw something in my parents, my grandparents and I grew up in a family where I wanted to be like my dad and mom. I wanted a marriage but I was close to idolatry thinking that marriage would be the answer. My mother was pretty convinced that if she couldn’t get me to Jesus then to get me to the altar would be the next thing.

The reality is that marriage was appealing because of the stability I saw. Today, children see not stability, but violence, broken hearts, broken relationships so sinful fears mitigate against marriage and extend singleness in our world. The average age in the 1960s when people got married was between 20 and 21. Today, is when they do get married, which is by no means the majority anymore, the average age is between 32 and 34. Another thing that has happened is that puberty is going down. It used to be that puberty was at 14, now it’s as early as 11 in some societies. The age 11 to 34 with hormones and testosterone raging – what do you think is happening? It is even more sins which brings me to observation number five.

The fifth observation is sinful lifestyles throughout adolescence which no longer is at age 18 for in recent studies it shows it extends all the way out to 26 but thinks it ought to move to age 28. In the midst of that, is not developing the habits of life that bring forth ethical clarity, but the habits of life that bring forth immoral chaos and confusion and that mitigates against marriage. Why? It is because some of those behaviors, one of the means of grace to bring sanctity to it, isn’t marriage. We will look closer in the next study at I Corinthians 7 but for now this is what it says.

I Corinthians 7:1-5 says [1] *Now concerning the matters about which you wrote: “It is good for a man not to have sexual relations with a woman.”* [2] *But because of the temptation to sexual immorality, each man should have his own wife and each woman her own husband.* [3] *The husband should give to his wife her conjugal rights, and likewise the wife to her husband.* [4] *For the wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does. Likewise, the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does.* [5] *Do not deprive one another, except perhaps by agreement for a limited time, that you may devote*

yourselves to prayer; but then come together again, so that Satan may not tempt you because of your lack of self-control.

The sexual relationship that initiates a marriage is one that recreates marriage and it is one that governs the passions as one is disciplined in their sexuality to give pleasure instead of rip pleasure away from someone. We now have another culture where the sexual relationship has replaced the goodnight kiss and in its place is simply an act of lust. Then after the hook-up one just simply leaves and no one can look at each other because there is no shameless relationship in such a sinful act before God.

A sixth observation is the sinful behaviors of promiscuity, sexual perversion, and pre-marital sexuality and engagement. Instead of marriage being a means of grace for those issues, now marriage is the casualty as those sexual relationships of promiscuity, perversion (same sex relationships) and pre-marital sexuality becomes the normative of the age. It's interesting how our culture of insanity has moved. Almost 15 to 20 years ago you would have filled out a profile in an interview for a job like this; are you married; yes, how is your relationship with your wife; it's wonderful and we're absolutely committed to sexual fidelity because we believe that sexuality and sexual relationships belong only in a marriage. Then you would have gotten a check and a star. Today they would write bigot across your interview paper. It's in this culture that our children are being raised.

Please forgive me for what I'm about to say but I have to say it. Our children are raised in this culture with curriculums and academies that are designed to make what is disobedient to God in terms of relationships in general and sexuality in particular whether those of promiscuity, pre-marital or perversions, the abnormal is declared normal. Through media, social media, technology, classrooms and curriculums in hours and hours and hours our children are hammered with this from people who have unbelievable skills of communication and instruments of communication. Whereas a preacher maybe gets a shot at maybe 40 minutes per week and maybe a Sunday school class of 30 minutes. It is such behavior that squanders and sinfully extends singleness in this world.

This observation has its results of the curse of sin in physical consequences, where Jesus identifies it as eunuchs from the mother's womb – in other words, because of the curse of sin there are developments in the womb that render someone incapable emotionally or physically or sexually in entering into a marital relationship.

The seventh is sinful profiles for a marriage mate in the covenant of marriage. What are we asking God to bring into our life? Who is it that we are praying for? Is it sinful profiles of what we are actually looking for? It is kind of like when men are focused on the externals. For example, a man might be praying 'God as I pray for marriage can You bring a runway beauty into my life and it would be great if she has a quiet time every morning.' I was talking with this one guy for a while and finally in frustration I said 'Listen, have you looked in a mirror recently? You're not a bargain my friend.' Then women begin to look for credentials, instead of 'is this a man who has a heart for the Lord and a heart for me and will lay down his life to love me and will grab the servant's towel to lead me?' What are the profiles that we are praying for and looking for?

Another one is sinful preparation. I can't tell you the number of times I've done singles conferences and young people will say to me 'how do I know when I find Mr. Right or Mrs. Right?' My answer is 'wrong question, call upon the Lord and say God what do you need to do in my life to make me Mr. Right or Mrs. Right for some else.' There is not only the sinful preoccupation with the external but a sinful dismissal of the internal. Instead of focusing on our

walk with the Lord in terms of sexual purity, sexual intimacy, intellectual and relational discourse, we work on the externals. Think of how much money is spent on training coaches, although I'm not opposed to it because I know some of you make money doing it, but we tend to give all our resources to the cosmetics and the physical instead of focusing on the internal, the spiritual, our walk with the Lord. I am not opposed to bodily discipline, but what about godliness which is of greater profit? Because of sin in this world, we even as believers sometimes will put our emphasis in the wrong areas and not in the areas that we need to.

I didn't put these things out there because there is no answer for there is an answer to every single one of them and it's the saving power of the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ. If He can redeem me and grant me a marriage that has been unbelievable by God's grace for 53 years in which I am a debtor to Him, to my wife and now to my children, then it will be done in your life, just go to Him, today, now!

What about redemption? I will leave you with these four things to think through. One, Christ as a Redeemer is not shortened by your singleness for He is actually working through it. Secondly, Christ uses singleness, like everything else He sovereignly allows to disciple us. Thirdly, Christ is altering us in the midst of our singleness and fourthly, we are driven closer to Christ as our only response.

We are going to build on all of this in our next study but I want to close by sharing these two Biblical texts with you. It's not sin to want the intimacy and interdependency of a marriage if you're single unless you elevate it to idolatry. What do you do with it so that it doesn't elevate to idolatry? The Lord calls us to be content in whatever circumstances we are in. We don't move forward in the Christian life out of coveting, but out of contentment. Jeremiah Burroughs says there is a rare jewel of Christian contentment. How do I get there Pastor?

The first text is Philippians 4:6-7 which says *[6] do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. [7] And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.* Do you believe you don't have to be anxious about anything in life? I'm not saying this unfeelingly for I understand the deep desires of intimacy and interdependency. I am saying it confidently. Jesus will personally stand guard, stand sentry over your heart.

Out of my contentment what do I do? The second text is Matthew 6:33 which says *[33] But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.* They will be added in the timing and manner He wants to put them in your life. So, walk by faith, calling out in prayer, saying 'no' to anxiety. Concerns are valid so bring them to Jesus. Anxieties and fears banish through the contentment that He brings with you and to you. I don't mean this flippantly. We'll all in some sense have some extended singleness this side of heaven for in heaven there will be no marriage or giving in marriage.

My last exhortation is to those whom God has allowed you to know here in this day and time intimacy and interdependency, I am all for a singles pastor to be right there available in those challenges and moments of life and I thank God for it, but these brothers and sisters in the perpetuation of singleness are in the family so you love them, bring them into your home and into your life. When that holiday comes invite them in. In that Sunday night after church let's go out together. Find ways to build relationships. I'm fine for our communities to be focused around a season of life but find ways to come into each other's lives and build your relationships together so that we might know to some level the intimacies and interdependencies of fellowship

in the family of God together. You can't program this, you have to deliver it and you deliver it out of love to Christ and love to one another. Let's pray.

Prayer:

Father, thank You for the time we could be together in Your Word. I pray that You would be with my brothers and sisters who are in an extended time of singleness and has gone beyond what seemingly is the temporary or the preparatory as Adam and Eve were or as children are who are raised and now launched into the world, but Father as they get a grasp of what creation, fall, redemption and the chaos within this world not only with the absence of men or the lack of women who are seeking or the lack of those who would want to be a godly husband or wife, bring the Gospel. Father, change all of this in our lives even as You use it right now to change us, in Jesus' Name, Amen.