

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

These questions are designed to help you talk about God's word and Pastor Brian's message with friends and family. You of course can use your own questions, but we'd like to give you this tool to encourage Biblical fellowship and discipleship in your circle of relationships. **Enjoy discovering more about Him!**

"MARRIAGE, SINGLENESS, AND SEXUALITY" | 1 COR 7:1-9 | PASTOR BRIAN BELL

WARM-UP QUESTION:

What comes to mind when you hear the word "sexuality"?

"Singleness is a Gift..." 1 Corinthians 7: 1, 7

Paul encourages people who are single by saying he wishes all were single like him and being celibate can be a gift. **How is this idea different from what our culture promotes today? What are challenges to being celibate? Benefits?**

"...and Marriage is a Gift" 1 Corinthians 7:2-5

Paul encourages married couples to have harmony sexually, having mutual consent in how they used their bodies for one another. **How does believing God created sex for married couples impact how it is used? What does mutual consent look like today?**

"To the Singles and Unmarried" 1 Corinthians 7: 6-9

Paul lets singles know it's good to stay unmarried, and that's it's fine to get married. Neither is better than the other. **What are ways to know if you are to be single or married? How can believers do better in treating singleness as a gift?**

REFLECTION QUESTION:

All adults experience singleness and some get married. God uses each situation with both celibacy and sexuality to mold them and gifts them the ability to show self-control and sacrifice **How have you been showing self-control and sacrifice with your sexuality? Have you been treating married and unmarried people with the same love and respect, or do you find you elevate one over the other? Pray that God would give you wisdom on how to love others and live out your situation faithfully.**

1 Corinthians 7:1-9

1-28-24

Marriage, Singleness, and Sexuality

I. Announce:

- A. Slide1,2 JM Workshops: Highlight the 6 workshops.
- B. Slide3 Wed Refresh: Communion and worship and
- C. Prayer: Lord may we *surrender* to Your love, grace, and mercy.

II. Slide4a Intro: Marriage, Singleness, and Sexuality

- A. We have a difficult topic this morning. *How do we handle our bodies and our relationships?* W/in the church some *swing towards* licentiousness & others toward legalism. Some w/**no rules** the *other side* who **love rules** ... and even think that we can *legislate sin*. [eg. more rules = less sin]
- B. God is not against sex ... *He is **for marriage** for some & **for celibacy** for others.*
 - 1. *Sex is not dirty but designed.* (By a Designer)
 - 2. Slide4b Jackie Hill Perry said, *Our **Sexuality**, is not our Soul. **Marriage** is not Heaven. **Singleness** is not Hell.*
- C. Singleness is an issue for **everyone**. We are all single at some time. Before marriage. After divorce. After being widowed.
 - 1. Diff categories: *single for all seasons* (never marry). *single for a season* (adults who will be married). *single again* (separated, divorced, widowed).
 - 2. Myth: *God's best is marriage, singleness is 2nd best.* (nope: actually a strong argument for singleness in this ch.)
 - 3. Singleness is important for some **seasons** and some **reasons**.
- D. *Sexual integrity* is one of the ways we respond to Jesus' love and grace.
 - 1. Your body is being redeemed by Jesus both **now**, and **in the future**. So what you do with your body **matters**.

III. Slide5 BOTH MARRIAGE AND SINGLENESS IS A GIFT (1-5) READ see vs.7

A. Paul starts with the question of **Singleness** (1,7-9)

1. He teaches that celibacy is good (1). That celibacy can be tempting (2,9). That celibacy is a gift from God (7). **And** that celibacy is wrong for married people (3-5).

a) **One camp** at this time, was encouraging *sexual abstinence in marriage* (the Essenes). Another camp taught, *marriage was wrong or unprofitable*. (ie. stay single) [Paul speaks against both of these]

B. (1a) Paul finally gets to discuss the several topics *they had inquired from him*.

C. Now Paul moves to **Marriage** (2-5)

D. (2) *her/his conjugal rights* - reflects *a Greek idiom* for *Let them have sexual relations*. [*spousal obligations* re: married couples who *pledged their bodies* to each other]

1. Jewish people saw married sexual intimacy as *the best deterrent to sexual immorality*, and Paul here agrees. **But ...**
2. **Marriage is more than God's release valve** for the sex drive. Paul had a much higher view of marriage than that. **And Marriage is not the lesser of 2 evils, but** as a necessary safeguard against evil.

E. **Slide6** Scripture gives at least **5 reasons** for **Marriage**:

1. **Procreation** - God commanded Adam & Eve *to be fruitful & multiply*. Gn.1:28
2. **Pleasure** - Prov.5:18,19, *Let your wife be a fountain of blessing for you. Rejoice in the wife of your youth. She is a loving deer, a graceful doe. Let her breasts satisfy you always. May you always be captivated by her love.*
 - a) *The Song of Solomon* centers around the physical attractions and pleasures of marital love.
3. **Partnership** - *Then the Lord God said, "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him."*¹
 - a) **Friendship** between husband and wife is one of *the key ingredients* of a good marriage.

¹ Genesis 2:18

4. **Picture** - of *The Church* - *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.*
Eph. 5:31,32

5. **Purity** - It protects from sexual immorality by meeting the need for physical fulfillment.

F. **Slide7** (3a) **Give** – *to fulfill, keep, or make good on an oath or promise, repaying a debt or obligation.*² [the present imperative indicates **habitual duty**]

G.(4) I think most guys have seen 4a, **but never** saw 4b, **so I’ll read again.** (mutuality)

1. **Release your rights to one another!** **But** please remember, in just 6 ch’s Paul teaches us regarding **love**, *Love suffers long and is kind, does not behave rudely, does not seek its own.*

2. Paul discusses this because of the problem of **unsatisfied husbands seeking fulfillment from *local temple prostitutes***. In Paul’s view, married men and women have **pledged their bodies to their spouses** and thus do not have authority to deny their spouses sexual relations.

a) Paul’s perspective assumes a framework in which ***a godly, loving husband does not take advantage of his wife.***

H.(5) **Do not deprive one another** - Those persons who have opted for *celibacy in marriage* are **not spiritually superior** at all (the Essenes taught that). **Their withdrawal has *deprived* their spouses of something that is rightfully important.**

1. Sexual relations between a husband and wife **are God-ordained and commanded.** The **exceptions** are when it is: **Mutual:** w/consent (lit. in symphony). **Temporary:** for a time, and come together again. **Important Reason:** that you may devote yourselves to ***focused prayer*** (NKJV adds fasting).

2. **Also remember** there are ***many diff seasons in a marriage*** where sexual relations might be **more difficult or uncomfortable** (esp for women): when

² The Bible Sense Lexicon, Lexham Press.

pregnant, while nursing, pre-menopausal, through menopause, diff fears, HSDD (Hypoactive/low Sexual Desire Disorder).

- I. Slide8a “*Marriage is a spiritual battleground, the Front Lines run right through your bedroom.*”
- J. Slide8b PS: No two people are *perfectly compatible*. That person doesn’t exist. (and if it is so, in what decade of their life?)
 - 1. Slide8c Denis de Rougemont, *Why should neurotic, selfish, immature people suddenly become angels when they fall in love?*
- K. Slide8d In marriage, we don’t pick between fulfillment and sacrifice. It’s about *mutual fulfillment through mutual sacrifice*. [agape love = *sacrificial commitment* for the good of the other] Love is fundamentally more action than emotion.
- L. Timothy Keller said the gospel is this: *We are more sinful and flawed in ourselves than we ever dared believe, yet at the very same time we are more loved and accepted in Jesus Christ than we ever dared hope.*
 - 1. Tying that into marriage, *the gospel can fill our hearts with God's love so that you can handle it when your spouse fails to love you as he/she should. That frees us to see our spouses sins and flaws to the bottom - and speak of them - and yet still love and accept our spouse fully.*

IV. Slide9a TO THE SINGLES AND UNMARRIED (6-9) *yes different*

- A. (6,7a) There were godly Jewish bachelors like *Paul* (at this time) *John Bapt, & Jesus*.
- B. (7b)Key: Each has his own gift/χαραisma from God – a present/gift given as a sign of favor. [both marriage & singleness take a *real gift* to be able to carry out]
- C. Obviously, singleness has many practical advantages: It allows much greater freedom in where and how a person serves the Lord. He is freer to move around and to set their own hours & schedule. Married persons have many cares and concerns that the unmarried do not have. (v.32-34)

- D. (8) **Unmarried** – various circumstances: *death of one's spouse, desertion by a spouse, divorce, or remaining single*, rather than those who have always been single. [*agamos*, only 4's in the NT. 11,32,34]
1. **Widow** – those who have lost their partners through death.
- E. (9) **For it is better to marry than to burn with passion** - **Slide9b** The antidote is marriage, w/in which individuals may give legitimate expression to their sex drive.
1. **Burn w/passion** was used throughout *ancient romances* to describe *the arousal of passion*, often (metaphorically) through Cupid's fiery darts.
 2. **However**, This is not justification for running off & getting married **quickly**, because you are **burning!**
 - a) ***No**, it simply helps you to determine **which gift** God gave you.
 - b) If they cannot exercise self control – *i.e. having passion*, don't try to remain single your whole life, get married.
 - c) It is not an excuse to say, *I can't help myself, or I have no self-control over it.*
 - (1) **Before you marry for sex**: please know the national average of married couples is ½ hour of intimacy a week. So if you marry for that purpose ... **what are you going to do for the other 167½ hours?**
 - (2) For Paul tells us in the Galatia letter that self-control is a **fruit of the spirit**. To not control the self is a **fruit of the flesh**.
 - d) He surely couldn't tell the Thessalonians, *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.* 1 Thes.4:3,4
 - (1) Paul couldn't command them to do something, they couldn't do.
- F. **Slide10a** What if I'm **single**, feel my **gift** is **marriage**, but I haven't found the right person yet?
1. **Don't seek the idea of marriage** - seek a person you can **love, trust, and respect**, letting marriage come as a **response** to that **commitment of love**.

2. Slide10b It is fine to be **on the lookout** for the right person, **but** the best way to find the right person is to continue the work of **being the right person**.
3. Slide10c Paul's tips for you: *learn to be content in any state you find yourself in.* And to *train your minds to focus only on that which is good and helpful.*
 - a) But you need something stronger than **willpower**. You cannot keep the law by trying not to break the law. You cannot be more loving by trying to become more loving ... **It takes transformation.** (but we've been transformed)
 - (1) **Key:** it's **our spirit** (will power) **and His Spirit** (power) working together. **Self effort and grace are partners, not in a tug a war.**
 - (2) **Self effort:** do what we can do ... *make space to surrender to God by the practices of Jesus, so that* God can do what we can't do ... *heal, liberate, and transform us,* into **people of love.** [John Mark Comer]
 - b) **Singles**, don't think God has *cursed* you, **or that** you are in *a holding pattern* until you get married. - I'm sorry for "*the Church*" making an **idol** out of **marriage**, pretty much making you *2nd class citizens* over the years. You're not Jr. Varsity. Paul says later in vs.28, "*but if you do marry, you have not sinned!*" Ha! The church has flipped this on its head.
 - c) **God has blessed you at this time to ...** work on **you**, to mature **you** in faith, **and** use **you** for kingdom service, in this state of **singleness**.
4. Slide10d If you believe your gift is marriage, but aren't married yet, God will provide strength to resist temptation. *And God is faithful. He will not allow the temptation to be more than you can stand. When you are tempted, he will show you a way out so that you can endure.* 1 Cor.10:13
5. Slide10e Finally, you should give thanks to the Lord for your situation. In your singleness, you can be grateful that you have the: *Freedom to be yourself. Freedom to attain your own aspirations. Freedom to take risks. Freedom with use of time. Freedom of mobility. Freedom in financial*

planning. Freedom to nurture deep relationships. Freedom to lean completely on the Lord. Freedom to serve the Lord in any way.

G. Keywords: