

**A Biblical View of Singleness**  
**Various Passages**  
**Pastor Jeremy Cagle, March 7, 2021**

Good morning and thank you for joining us for another online sermon here at Grace Fellowship. Chilliwack. Thank you for joining us for another online message. If you're new to our church, my name is Jeremy Cagle and I'm the teaching pastor here at Grace. Like a lot of churches, right now here in B.C., we've taken to doing a lot of our ministry online like this. We are doing some in person things that the government allows, but we're doing our sermons online.

Just to say a few words about that, one question that's come up in our congregation during this season is, "Is there anything we can do to reach out to the government during this time? Is there anything we can do to let them know that we want to meet, we want to be together, we want to be in person as a whole congregation. And so, is there some way we can go about getting that message across?" There is actually. There are some things that we can do. One thing our elders have done this past week is put together some letters for you to send in as a congregation to the government. We've put some form letters together for you to sign if you're comfortable with them, if you like the contents. You can even change them as well, to something that you would be ready to endorse; and you can send them to some of your leaders. And so for instance, one of them is a letter for you to sign as an individual member of Grace Fellowship Church or just as an individual person. And another one is a letter that was written by me as your pastor. It's a letter that I wrote myself and I just want to read it to you, so you know the contents in it. We're going to be sending this to you tomorrow in an email, so you're going to have this in your in your inbox, but let me just read this to you. I'll say a few words about it afterwards.

Dear Premier Horgan, Minister Dix, and Dr. Bonnie Henry regarding the regulations and restrictions on churches due to COVID-19.

Thank you for all the effort you've made to keep people in British Columbia healthy. All our lives have been difficult over this past year, and I know that your jobs have been particularly challenging. My concern is over the regulations imposed on churches during this time. After reading about the pandemic of 1918 churches closed for two weeks at a time when people in their community were dying. Our church has been closed since November 19, 2020 in addition to the three months it was closed last Spring. We have not heard of a single case of anyone in our congregation dying from this virus since then, and I know it's been your goal to prevent that. Christians are to submit to and follow those in authority. We respect the Canadian government and those God is putting leadership over us, but we have seen a glaring inconsistency in your allowing businesses to meet while shutting down the churches. The value judgment of essential versus non-essential has also made it difficult for those who value their faith as highly as we do. Could church leaders work together with you and our health authorities to prevent the spread of

the virus? We're asking that you rescind this order as it pertains to churches meeting and apply the same rules to us as you're applying to other businesses. We have six doctors who are part of our local congregation, and they could assist our church leadership and keeping people safe. They could also play a key role in helping us to where masks, do contact tracing physical distancing, and etc. We know some churches here in Canada and in the United States that have continued to meet during this pandemic, some with no COVID-19 protocols. We're not aware of any evidence that the virus has spread rapidly among them as a result, we assume that the chance of spread would be even less were the protocols to be followed, and we're willing to do that should you allow us to meet.

Respectfully yours, Jeremy Cagle. Teaching Pastor, Grace Fellowship Chilliwack.

And again, we have two letters that are like that for you that we'll be giving to you. And what we're asking you to do is take each letter and send them in to three of your health officials. We're asking you to send them to Premier John Horgan; Adrian Dix, Health Minister; and Dr. Bonnie Henry, Provincial Health Officer. The addresses are on the letters for you, it should be a pretty simple thing. Again, all you have to do, if you're comfortable with this, is to sign them, put them in an envelope and send them off to your officials. But all this is to say, these are strange times aren't they? I mean they're unusual times and they call for unusual methods. They call for us to do unusual things and think outside the box because we would love to have everyone meeting right now. We would love to have everyone together, but if we're not able to do that, well, then we need to find a way to address it. We need to find some way to reach out to the government and tell them that we would like them to change what they're doing.

Now, someone asked me the other day, you know, "What do you think the Lord is teaching us right now? What do you think God is trying to show the church through all of this?" And I said, "I think He's trying to see how flexible we are." I think He's trying to see how much it will stretch, and do for His name, because it can be so easy to talk tough right now. It can be so easy to talk rebellion and say the church should go underground and it should meet in secret. But let's just be honest, if you're not willing to do this, I don't know if you'd be willing to do that. If you're not willing to take small steps, like printing a letter and signing your name on it, I don't know if you'd be willing to do something as drastic as going underground, we need to start here. First, we need to start with something small. And there may be a time for us to do those other things, there may come a time when we have to take even farther steps, but we need to start here and begin here first.

It might interest you to know that several members of our congregation have written letters to the government. Some of our members have taken it on themselves, some of our medical people in the church, to show courage and express their concerns personally, individually, which we appreciate. We think that's a wonderful thing to do. We admire them for that, but we thought it

would make more of an impact if we did this all together. We thought it would make more of impression if we did it all as one congregation or individually as members at the same time. So please join us in that. If you have any questions on that, please contact me or one of the elders.

With that said, while we're talking about that this morning, while we're talking about the subject of the church, I want to invite you to open your Bibles to a book that discusses that. I want to invite you to turn in your Bibles to a book that says quite a bit about the church. And that's the book of Ephesians. So if you would, that's the book we're in this morning, and if you would just please open your Bibles with me to the book of Ephesians 5. As you're turning there, you might be wondering why we're still in the book of Ephesians as a church. You might be wondering why we're still going through a book like this at a time like this when things are so difficult. We're doing that because the book of Ephesians was actually written during a difficult time. It was actually written during a tough time because Paul was in jail. The author of the letter was in prison as he wrote this. Chapter three, verse one refers to him being a prisoner of Christ, and he was not in a pleasant prison like we have in North America. He wasn't in a safe one. He was in a very dangerous one.

And if you want to know what he was thinking about, just read this with me, if you read in Ephesians 5:22 to the end of the chapter, this is what Paul was thinking about in jail. It says,

Wives, be subject to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also as the head of the church, He himself being the Savior of the body. But as the church is subject to Christ, so also wives ought to be to their husbands in everything. Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her, so that He might sanctify her having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thin; but that she would be holy and blameless. So husbands ought also to love their own wives as their own bodies. He who loves his own wife loves himself; for no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ also does the church, because we are members of His body. FOR THIS REASON A MAN SHALL LEAVE HIS FATHER AND MOTHER AND SHALL BE JOINED TO HIS WIFE, AND THE TWO SHALL BECOME ONE FLESH. This mystery is great; but I'm speaking with reference to Christ and the church. Nevertheless, each individual among you also is to love his own wife even as himself, and the wife must see to it that she respects her husband.

As you read that, it's interesting to think of the circumstances that I just described to you. It's interesting to think that Paul was in jail as he said this because it doesn't sound that way, does it? It certainly doesn't read like a jailhouse letter. To the contrary, it's pretty normal. It sounds very ordinary because it reminds us that God is not distracted by the things of this world. God is not

troubled by the things that trouble us. We get worked up about so many things down here on this level, so many things on the earthly plane; but God's in the heavenly plane, He's far above us. And this doesn't throw Him off. This pandemic last year threw us off, didn't it? It turned everything sideways, backwards, up and down, that sort of thing. It didn't do that for God. Not at all. He just goes on with life in this book.

And the passage actually starts off this way. In verse 21, I forgot to read that to you a moment ago, but in verse 21, it says “and be subject to one another, in the fear of Christ.” The word be subject here is the Greek word *hypotasso*. It's a compound word from *hypo*, which means “under” and *tasso*, “to put.” It means to put yourself under someone or to willingly follow their lead. It was an army term in the first century because if you're familiar with the army, you'll know this is how it works, with one person putting themselves under another. So that a private lines up under a sergeant, and a sergeant lines up under a lieutenant, and the lieutenant lines up under a major, that's what this word means. That's what it's referring to. Paul says this is a basic principle of life. This is a basic principle of society, that we all line up under someone, we all follow somebody somewhere; and he says it starts in the home. This principle of being subject to one another in the fear of Christ begins with the family. Family comes first in this, because verse 22 mentions the wives. It mentions the ladies in the church. Then verse 23 mentions the husbands, but the idea here is that this is how God wants us to live this out. This is how He wants us to apply this principle by submitting to one another in the home.

In other words, you don't get a pass on this, just because the times are bad. You don't get a pass on your duties as a husband or a wife, or a father or a mother, just because the world's gone upside down. Paul was in jail, and this was still on his mind. Paul was in prison, and he was still thinking about these things; and you have to do the same today. You can't let all of this crazy world distract you from what's really important in the eyes of God – and that's your family. This transcends our circumstances.

As soon as you say that, you know, a question comes up that I want to talk to you about today. As we've kind of finished off this passage here, and we've gone through this. We've looked at Ephesians 5 about every way we could, but now that we're on the other end of it, there's an issue that arises that that I want to look at with you today. And that is what about the single people in the church? What does the Bible say to them?

Okay, this is what it says to the married people. That's important. And this is what it says to those who have a family, walk through this passage. We've studied all this. But what about those who don't? What about those who aren't married at all? What about those who are not husbands or wives? Or they're not parents in that sense? How do they apply a passage like this one? I don't have to tell you that we need to ask that today because there are a lot of single people in the

church. I don't have to tell you this is important because there are a lot of people who fit that description.

In fact, there have been some studies done on this, and it's been said that single adults might be the fastest growing demographic in Canada right now. They might be one of the fastest growing groups among us. And there are lots of reasons for that, several reasons why they're growing so quickly. I mean, one is because of divorce. One reason single adults are growing so fast in this country is because, you know, they tried marriage and it failed. They tried to start a family, they tried to start a home and it didn't work, it fell apart, so they don't want to do that again. They would rather stay away from it.

Another reason, to put it even more bluntly than that, is because of sin. Another reason people are remaining single in Canada right now is because they want to choose a life of sin. They want to be in a relationship. They want to be with a partner or someone, but they don't want to make a commitment to them. They don't want to make any kind of promise or sacrifice and so they're just shacking up. They're just living in wide open adultery, which is a far worse thing. This is what's given rise to the term "common law households" or "common law marriages." This is so common in this country. The government actually had to come up with a term for it so you could tax them. And the idea is you act like you're married, you pretend like you're married, but you're not. Another reason for the singleness growing here.

Another one is age. Some people are single just because of their age; they're not sinning, they're not doing anything wrong. They just haven't found the right person to marry yet; they haven't found the right spouse.

There are lots of other reasons as well, but what I want to show you this morning, and what I want to talk to you about is that for Christians, there's another reason to stay single. For believers, there's another reason to forego marriage and not have a family; and that is so you can serve the Lord. As a Christian, as a believer, you can live a life like that, so that you can have more time to spend with him. It almost sounds strange to say that. It almost sounds weird to talk about it that way because our world is so relationship driven. It's so romance consumed. But when you survey the Bible, one thing you notice is that it wasn't like that. When you read the Bible it was very different from our world today because there were a lot of single people in here. There were a lot of single people in the Bible, it was full of them from cover to cover. To be fair, it was full of married people too. To be fair, there were a lot of married people in the Bible, but that's my point; there were a lot of both married and single. You saw them both in the pages of Scripture, which is something we forget about in the church today. It's something we tend to overlook because we've made it hard for single people to come to church. We've made it so difficult for them.

I wasn't married until my mid to late 20s, so I can relate to this. We're so family driven here, not that that's always a bad thing, but just a reality. Sometimes we're so child centered that we leave the single people out because when they come to church, it's all about family, family, family all the time. Depending on which church you attend, or where you go, I mean, all they see are children, children, children to the point that they think that's all the church is about, that's all God cares about. And so, they don't feel like it's for them. But when you look at the early church, it wasn't like that. When you look at the church in the New Testament, it was very different from that because if you think about it, Jesus was single; He never married. Now let that sink in for a moment. I mean, obviously God doesn't have a problem with single people. Obviously, He doesn't have a problem with folks in this category, because His Son was that way. The whole Christian religion started that way.

You could add to this, Jesus was sinless; so it's not a sin to be single. Not at all. And to add to this, the Christian faith was then carried on by a group of single men. All of His disciples were single, except one, Peter. Peter was the only one who had a wife. The rest of these guys never married. John the Baptist was single. In fact, he was a bachelor if there ever was one. He wore camel's hair and ate locusts and wild honey, that sounds like a bachelor thing to do. I know some single guys today that act like that. Mary, Martha, and Lazarus were single. So is Lydia, the seller of purple. From what we could tell so were Timothy and Apollos, we never saw any wives for them. Jeremiah was single, Nehemiah was single, Naomi was after her husband died, and on and on and on. The Apostle Paul, the guy who wrote this letter, you're reading the words of a single man, when you read the book of Ephesians. It was a very normal thing to do back then. Very common thing in the Bible.

One commentator said it this way, "Singleness was very common in Bible times, for the simple reason that it freed people up for more ministry. There are some wonderful advantages in terms of the hours you could put in and the sacrifices you could make, if you did not have a family and you didn't have kids; so many early Christians chose to go that route. They chose to become single in order to do more for the Lord."

I mention this because so many people don't get this today. So many of us forget that singleness can be used this way for the Lord, probably because it's so abused in the world, probably because it's so abused in our culture. They hear so much talk about marriage today, they hear so much talk about the family, that they feel like there's something wrong with them if they're single; but the Bible doesn't say that. God doesn't say there's anything wrong with you if you're single. There's a place for that in the church. I also mention this because some people overlook this because they forget that, because they are so influenced by the world, they are so influenced by the culture, to the point that they think they're nothing if they're not married. I've met with people like this. I've sat down and talked with them and held their hand while they cry. They think they're a loser if they don't have a spouse. Friends, let me tell you, the Bible doesn't say that

either. It never makes that claim because you're not a loser in the eyes of God. He still loves you, He still has a place for you. And we need to remember that today.

You know, before my wife and I were married, I spent almost four years in the single's ministry out of Grace Community Church, in Los Angeles, where we had about 100 to 200 single people. There was a very large ministry because Los Angeles is a Singles city. I mean, people come there in their single years, and a lot of them would come into our ministry there. And while I was there, I remember meeting several people who said they were going to stay single, they were going to remain this way so they could go into the mission field. So they could preach the gospel there. Because they said that was the place they were going was so dangerous, it was so bad, that you really shouldn't start a family there; it wasn't safe to do that. And I remember thinking, when I heard that, that is a wonderful reason to stay single. That is a wonderful reason to stay in this phase of life. The Lord calls some people to do that. The Lord gifts some people so they can make that decision in life, which is what we're going to talk about today.

If you're taking notes this morning, we're going to look at two things the Bible says about singleness. That's our outline for today. That's what it's about. It's pretty simple. But if you're taking notes in several passages of Scripture, we're going to look at two things the Bible says about singleness. We're going to do this because you need to know that the Bible does address this issue today. You need to know that the Bible does talk about this topic. It doesn't forget about it, it doesn't leave single people out because the Bible talks about every issue of life. It's a sufficient book, it's totally complete in every way. And therefore, it tells you how to please God when you have a family. It tells you how to please Him when you have a wife or a husband or kids, all those things. And it also tells you how to please Him when you don't. Believe it or not, the Bible tells you how to please Him when you live alone.

Friends, make no mistake, God doesn't operate like the world does. He doesn't operate by the same set of principles and values because he doesn't choose you based on your marital status. He doesn't love you based on whether you have a family or not. His love is so much deeper than that. It is based on something so much deeper. And we're going to talk about that this morning by looking at two things the Bible says about singleness. The first one is that singleness is a good thing.

The first thing the Bible says about singleness is that singleness is a good thing, which means that if you're single, you shouldn't feel bad about it. If you're single, you shouldn't feel guilty as if you're doing something wrong, because you're not/ You're not doing anything wrong because singleness is a good thing in the eyes of God. If you want to see this for yourself, turn in your Bibles over to the book of 1 Corinthians. We're going to leave the book of Ephesians here for the rest of our time this morning, and we're going to look at 1 Corinthians 7, it's a few pages to the left there.

As we're turning there, this is quite an interesting place to turn because the church at Corinth has been considered to be one of the worst churches in history. It's considered to be one of the worst churches of all time because if you've read through this book before, you'll know that it's just one problem after another in here. It's just one issue after another in the book. Some say was a church split waiting to happen. It was a bomb waiting to go off and so Paul, as he writes to them, does his best to help them. He does his best to address these issues. He just starts tackling them off one at a time, checking them off. And he comes to the issue of marriage in chapter seven. In chapter seven, he comes to the issue of the family. And let's read what he says in 1 Corinthians 7 starting in verse one. He says,

Now concerning the things about what you wrote, it is good for a man not to touch a woman. But because of immoralities, each man is to have his own wife, and each woman is to have her own husband. The husband must fulfill his duty to his wife, and likewise also the wife to her husband. The wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does; and likewise also the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does. Stop depriving one another, except by agreement for a time, so that you may devote yourselves to prayer, and come together again so that Satan will not tempt you because of your lack of self-control. But this I say by way of concession, not of command. Yet I wish that all men were even as I myself am. However, each man has his own gift from God, one in this manner, another in that one. But I say to the unmarried and to the widows, that it is good for them if they remain even as I am. But if they do not have self-control, let them marry; for it is better to marry than to burn with passion.

If you notice, as you read that, that is a pretty tough passage to read, and that it's pretty tough one to interpret. Some passages are pretty straightforward, but this is one where there are a lot of cultural things going on in here, a lot of contextual things. Paul starts off in verse one this way, he says, "Now concerning the things about what you wrote, it is good for a man not to touch a woman." You can tell just reading that Paul is speaking sensitively here, he's showing some tact, because he's using a Hebrew expression that is synonymous with intimacy. To touch a woman was another way of saying to sleep with her, to become intimate with her. Paul says it's a good for a man not to do that before he is married. It's good for a man not to do that, if he's single. Obviously, Paul's not telling all men not to do this. He's not telling all men not to touch their wives, because he goes on to say, if you can't avoid doing this, but because of immorality, each man is to have his own wife, and each woman is to have her own husband. And then he says, the husband should fulfill his duty to his wife, and the wife to her husband. And he goes on to explain that.

Then he says something interesting at the end of this passage. He says something strange in verse seven. He says, “Yet I wish that all men were even as I myself am.” Now what does that mean? What is he saying there? Paul is single. We just said that. So to wish that “all men were as I am” is to wish that all men were single, it’s to wish that all men were not married. And that doesn't seem to make a lot of sense. I thought marriage was a good thing, right? I thought marriage was a blessing. I mean, the Bible certainly presents it that way. The Book of Ephesians presents it that way. It's a wonderful thing, it represents Christ and the church. So why does he say this here? Well, when Paul says, “I wish that all men were as I am.” He's using a grammatical device known as a hyperbole, which is an exaggeration for effect. In other words, Paul is not saying that speaking literally here, he's not saying he wished literally all men to be as he is, because if that were the case, there would be no more children born on this earth and there would be no families. All life would cease. He doesn't mean that. He's just saying that singleness is a good thing. He's saying it's a blessing in its own right. Marriage is a blessing to in fact, all these verses leading up to that are a way of saying that marriage is a blessing. God gave us marriage so that we can enjoy intimacy together and we can battle the flesh in that way. Lots of other blessings for marriage that we could talk about, but his point here at the end is that singleness is a blessing too. He says each man has his own gift from God. One in this manner, and another in that one. That means that some men have the gift of singleness, some men are called to go that direction in life (we'll say a few words about that in a moment), and some have the gift of marriage; but either way, they both come from the Lord. That’s Paul's point here. Either way, whether you're single or whether you're married, they both come from His hand.

While singleness comes with its own challenges and while it comes with its own difficulties such as loneliness and isolation and awkwardness, those types of things, singleness comes with many benefits as well. It comes with many blessings. Just to show you what I mean, it might be good to talk about some of those. It might be good to walk through some of the blessings of the single life.

For one thing, for a Christian, singleness frees you up to serve the Lord in a way that married people can't. It frees you up in a way to serve the Lord that the married people can't because it opens up your schedule. It may not always look at it that way but it makes you more available than you would be otherwise because you don't have all the pressures of married life weighing in on you. You don't have all the responsibilities and commitments crashing in on your schedule, so you can come and go as you please, to some degree. You can go out and stay out as long as you want with no one pulling you back. You can stay up till two in the morning if you want to, to counsel someone, to help someone with a problem. Or you can take a week off of work to help with youth camp or Vacation Bible School, if there's a need there. You have the freedom to do that. You're available in that way.

Not only that, but singleness has less distractions as well. I mean, another blessing of singleness is that you have far fewer interruptions than a married person does. If you don't believe me just hang out with a married person with kids for a couple of days. Hang out with them for a couple hours. You don't have to wake up to the sound of a baby crying in the next room. Babies cry a lot. Ask any mom, they cry every three hours when they're born, begging for milk. You don't have to wake up to the sound of furniture crashing in the next room, lamps breaking, things like that.

Which leads to one more benefit to being single, and that is that you have more time. And that's really what it all goes down to at the end of the day. That's what this is all about, what Paul is saying here. A single person just has more time than a married person. Since you aren't so busy with family and busy with kids and those things, a single person has time to do other things. They can pour their lives into others in a way that no one else can because you can take the time you would normally devote to the family, devote to marriage, and you can give it all to the Lord. You can give it all to the church. It's what Paul did with his singleness. It's what the apostles did. It's what the Lord Jesus did nobody gave more than He did. It's been said that Jesus was like a walking hospital in Israel during His ministry. He was healing people all the time, performing miracles, teaching, helping sinners, and the reason He could do that was because He didn't have the obligations of a family.

I love marriage, and I love having a family. It's been a joy in my life and I would encourage anyone to go that route if they feel led. But I would also say is busy. And for those of you who are married and have kids, you would admit it's a crazy life. There have been times that I have come up here to preach with toys bouncing around in my pocket, and I don't know how they got there. They're not mine. My kids were sticking them in, sitting in the pews with me. Or there's been other times, you know, I've found stickers on the inside of my jacket, sometimes on the outside as I came up to preach; and I'm coming up here with glitter on my hands and things like that. But a single person is spared from all that.

A single person is kept from those types of things. They can teach and just teach; or they can preach and not be bothered by those types of distractions. That's what Paul is talking about here. That's what he means when he says, "I wish that all men were even as I myself am." He's not saying that singleness is better than marriage. That's not the point of the passage. He's not saying that it's stacking them against each other and pitting them like this. He's just saying that singleness has its own benefit as well. This is how Paul used his singleness. You know, he didn't sit around the house, saying "Poor me. Woe is me. Why can I be married? Why can I have what everybody else has?" He didn't sit around at church and watch everybody play with their families and become jealous and become bitter, he didn't act like that at all. He used this time to give himself up for others. He used the freedom to spend for them. Paul saw his married friends. He

had several married friends, Priscilla and Aquila were one of the ones we're aware of. He saw how they lived. He knew what it was like; he knew the distractions and the craziness and the interruptions and all that stuff. And he says, "I don't have to worry about that, so I'm going to spend that time for the Lord. I'm going to spend that time for Him."

You know, having said that, let me just say this, this is so different from the way the world looks at this issue and this is so different from the way that culture looks at singleness because they look at it as an opportunity to sin, right? They look at it as an opportunity to sow your wild oats and live it up and party while you still can. Party before you're chained down to marriage. I can't think of a worse way to look at that, but that's how the world sees it. In other words, they look at it as an opportunity to be selfish. That's why the number of single people has grown in Canada right now. That's why it's growing in North America because people just want to live for themselves, they want to do their own thing. That's about as far away from a Christian mindset as possible. That's about as far away from a God honoring mindset as you can get because if you're in Christ, you can't do that. If you're in Christ, you can't be selfish with your singleness because you've been bought with a price, and you are not your own. You have to use it for others.

I don't know if you've ever heard the name Robert Chapman before, but he's someone we've talked about before as a church. He's a name that's come up in previous years. Robert Chapman was a contemporary of Spurgeon who pastored the same church in England for 70 years, which is amazing. Think about that. He pastored from the time he was 30 until the time that he died at the age of 100. That's a long time, extremely long time. The average pastor today, someone said, pastors five years or something like that. But the most fascinating thing about him is that he did it while remaining single. Robert Chapman never married, never took a wife; and when he was asked why he did that, he said it was because he could do more for the Lord that way. He could do more for the Lord as a single man than he could with a family. He could work for less money. He could work for a smaller salary from the church. and he could do other things like open up his home and provide hospitality. But my friends, that's how we should look at this issue today as Christians.

That's how we need to look at this issue of singleness in the church. We should use it to do things like that. We should use it to serve others with. It's not to serve us. Singleness is not to serve us, marriage isn't either by the way, whichever one of these you choose in life. They're both to be spent in pouring into others. Which brings us to another point to consider this morning. It brings us to another thing the Bible says about singleness.

The first one is that singleness is a good thing. First thing the Bible says about this is that it's a good thing, which means that if you're single, you shouldn't feel bad about it. You shouldn't feel guilty, like something's wrong. You're not doing anything wrong. Singleness comes with its own

benefits, it comes with its own blessings; and God has designed it that way. Singleness doesn't come from Satan, it comes from God. It's something that He's called certain people to do, which brings us to another point to consider this morning. Another thing the Bible says about singleness, and that is that there is such a thing as the gift of singleness.

The second thing the Bible says about singleness is that there is such a thing as the gift of singleness, which means that some people have a special gifting in this. Some people have a special calling to remain single for the rest of their life. It's not an accident. It's not a mistake, that they're wired that way. If they're a Christian, it's a gift from God. If you read back at the end of this text here that we've read a moment ago, 1 Corinthians 7:7, Paul writes, and he says,

Yet I wish that all men were even as I myself am. However, each man has His own gift from God, one in this manner, and another in that one.

Now again, this is a difficult passage and there are some challenging things in here to think about, but it would do good to remember why Paul is writing this in the first place. It would be good to remember the context for what he's saying there because he's saying this as a rebuke to them. He's writing this passage to the Corinthian church to correct some errors, to confront them on some things.

In verse one, farther up, he says this, chapter seven verse one says, "Now concerning the things about what you wrote, it is good for a man not to touch a woman." In other words, the Corinthians had written to Paul about this. They had written him a letter asking him questions about the topic of marriage and singleness and intimacy and all this kind of stuff. They did that for a reason because the town of Corinth was a very adulterous place. It was a very lustful city much like our modern day Las Vegas. So sex was on everyone's minds there; it was a common topic of conversation, so in response to that, a lot of people chose a life of celibacy. It is just something you saw in the early church, you don't see it so much today. The Roman Catholics will do this. They're the priests, Roman Catholic priests go this route. But in response to the wickedness that they would see around them, and all the depravity and lust, a lot of the early Christians, including probably some of these Corinthians would choose to go in the other direction, and they would abandon marriage altogether. They would abandon any kind of physical relationship because they thought it was bad. They thought it was evil. And so Paul writes this to confront that. That's the setting of this chapter. He's writing this to rebuke them and remind them that marriage is not bad. It's not evil. It's a good thing in the eyes of God. It's something that He has created. At the same time, Paul says singleness is too. Singleness is a good thing as well. He talks about both sides of that spectrum.

Here in verse seven, Paul refers to it as a gift. The word here is *charisma* in Greek or a "present" from the Lord. In verse seven, he says, "I wish that all men were even as I myself am," that

means single. And then he says, “however, each man has his own gift from God.” That means each man has his own calling. Each man has his own place in society, some have been called to be married, some have been called to take a wife, God laid that on their heart, He pulled them in that direction. And at the same time, God called other men in this direction. This means that singleness is not a curse, it's a blessing. This means that singleness is not punishment or purgatory or something like that, the way some people think of it today. On the contrary, it's something good if it came from God, it's a good thing, right? If it came from God, it's a blessing. We have to see it that way.

And I might add this, this is important as well. This is not a default gift. This is not just for those who say I haven't found the right person yet. I haven't found the right somebody even though I tried, even though I look; so I guess I have the gift of singleness. No, that's not the way this works. That's not the way it's worded here. And it's not a gift for those who say that “I hate marriage” either. This is not a gift for those who say, “I can't stand marriage. It makes me so angry to look at people like that. I can't stand the whole thing.” That's not what this is about. This is for people that say, “I like marriage. It's just not for me.” This is for people that say, “I like the institution, I see the place that it has in society and in the eyes of God, I just have another calling. God has called me to remain single.”

You know, when you go through the pages of Scripture, because this was so common back then, because there were so many single people, there was quite a bit written about this. It came up several times and one passage that's particularly interesting is back in Matthew 19. Jesus made a very interesting statement about this, made a very powerful statement because after saying that a man can't get a divorce, after saying that a man can't separate from his wife, except for the case of adultery, except for the case of marital unfaithfulness, the disciples who were a bunch of single guys except for Peter, they weighed in on that. They said, “Well Jesus, then it's better for a man not to marry them. In other words, it's better for a man not to take the risk, if that's what You're saying, if the only time I could divorce somebody is because of adultery, maybe a man should just stay away from it. In response to that, Jesus says, “Not all men can accept this statement, but only those to whom it is given.” In other words, there is a gift of singleness. “The only people that can stay away from marriage in the way you're saying, guys,” is what Jesus is saying, “are those to whom it's been given to them.” And He goes on and says this: explains what He means. He says, “For there are eunuchs who were born that way from their mother's womb; and there are eunuchs who were made eunuchs by people; and there are also eunuchs, who made themselves eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of heaven. The one who is able to accept this, let him accept it.”

That's another difficult passage there because it's referring to a term we're not familiar with. The word “eunuch” refers to someone who couldn't have children. It refers to someone who couldn't have a family for several reasons, many different reasons that could be the case. Jesus names a

couple of them in here, he says, some people are that way from their mother's womb. In other words, they're born that way. They're born without the ability to have children. So they got it naturally, just to think of nature. He says some are made that way by others. In other words, it was forced on them. They didn't want to be eunuchs, but someone made them do that. That was a very common thing in the first century, because a lot of masters would do that to their slaves, as a way to keep them under control. They would castrate them. Then He says, some people have made themselves eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom. In other words, they did it for God, they gave up a family for Him. It was a choice that they made. It was a decision they made for spiritual reasons not for anything physical. Physical had nothing to do with it. This is for the sake of God's kingdom.

You know, and as I read that and tell you about that story and think about that passage, I can't help but put my mind back in the first century; and think that was an interesting thing to say to these men. It was quite a thing to say to the disciples because they fit that category. They had made that decision in life. They'd given up a family in order to serve the Lord, they'd given up everything, except Peter, Peter had a family, but other than that, the rest of them were this way. I'm sure as the years went by and the ministry got hard, it got lonely being out in the mission field in a foreign place. Some of them would've look back on this. Some of these twelve guys would've looked back on this statement from Jesus and said, "That was me He was talking about me there. They would have looked at other people, they would have looked at other people's wives, other people's kids, other people's families and the relationship dynamic. They would've said, "You know what? That's wonderful. You know what? I'm so happy for them. I'm so thrilled that they have a family, but it's just not for me. That's not what God has called me to do. That's not the way the life He's asked me to live. Jesus called me to this. He called me to stay single."

You know, to put it another way, and say it in another term is some people are single for a reason, and some people are single for a season. Some people are single for a reason, and some people are single for a season. What I mean is that some people are single because they're waiting to be married. They're single because they're waiting to find the right person. It is a seasonal thing for them. It's just a stage of life. And other people are single because it's not. Singleness is not a stage of life for them. It's not a seasonal thing. They're not waiting to be married at all; they're going to stay alone for the rest of their life. They're going to stay that way, from now on, and they're okay with that because they're doing it for this. They're doing it for the Lord.

This is something that's so important for us to talk about today. It's so important for us to discuss because like I said, there's so much misunderstanding about this issue, right now. So much confusion about this because our world is so lustful today. It's so infatuated with romance and relationships, but some of that's crept into the life of the church. Just like it was in the days of Corinth, some of this is has infiltrated into our ranks, which is why you see so many books being

published on the subject of dating today. It's why you see so many Christian conferences and Christian seminars being held on the subject of singleness and romance and all of that, to the point you can't even keep up with all of it. I mean, it seems like every time you turn around, there's another one being done. Go look on the bookshelf of your local Christian bookstore, go shop on Amazon. That's what you'll see.

If you've ever been to one of those conferences, or been in one of those seminars, read one of those books, you can see some crazy stuff in there. Some really strange ideas, because they tell you to write out a list of all the things you're looking for in a wife, they tell you to write out a list of all the qualities that you hope to find, as if one person is going to fulfill all of that. As if one person is going to meet all *your* expectations, as if this is all about you. Or they tell you to come up with a questionnaire. They tell you to come up with a list of 30 questions to give any guy who asks you out, so he can win your heart. As if that's a good idea as if that's a good way to start a relationship. "Take my test, my three hour exam." Some of these speakers say things like, "Well, if nobody wants to do that, then you must have the gift of singleness. If nobody wants to make that commitment to you on the front end, you must have what this is talking about here." But friends, I want to tell you, that's not true. It's not the way it works. This is so much more simple than that. This is far less complicated than that. What Paul's saying here in 1 Corinthians 7 is that if you don't want to get married, then you have the gift of singleness. If this is something that's just not on your radar at all, it's just not on the map for you, you don't have a desire, you don't have a compulsion, then you have what this is talking about here. That's what this means. Otherwise, you don't. Otherwise, you don't have the gift of singleness, and you need to find a spouse.

You know, I don't know about you, but I personally can't see Paul going around Israel with a clipboard full of questions to ask a potential wife. I just don't see him doing that. I can't see one of the apostles going around with a checklist of all the things they're looking for, and going around and saying, "Yes, this one measures up check. No, that one doesn't minus. Guess I have the gift of singleness. I guess that must be for me." That's not the way it worked. It was that they didn't want to get married, so they didn't get married. They didn't want to start a family, so they didn't start a family. And they didn't dwell on it. They didn't let it consume all their time and all their thoughts and other energies because they went on to focus on other things.

We should do the same thing today. We need to stop being so distracted with this issue, especially young people. We need to stop being so taken up with it. I know it's important. Absolutely, it's important. Getting married is a big deal. Dating is a big deal. But this is a bigger deal. Serving God is far more important and everything else falls under that. We have to remember that today.

You know, when I was in seminary, we talked a lot about this because a lot of us were single. Quite a number of us were in our 20s or 30s, and we just got out gotten out of university. We were looking for a wife, and so the subject came up a lot. I remember praying to the Lord at this time. I said, "Lord, I want to be with someone. I want to have a wife; so please either change that or get me ready." Please either give me the gift of singleness, give me something I don't have right now or prepare me to be a husband. And by His grace over time, the Lord did that. Over time, the Lord answered my prayer. But my point is, you don't want to make it any harder than that. You don't want to make it any more complicated because this thing is complicated enough already. It's hard enough as it is; let's just keep it simple. And let's pray for the Lord's help in this area. Pray for His wisdom.

We need more single people in the church today like this. We need more people who are here whenever the doors are open. They're here whenever there's an opportunity to serve, they're knocking the walls down to get in because they have this gift. God has given it to them, which leads me to ask for the single people in our church today. Are you doing this today? Are you here every time the doors are open? Are you here whenever there's an opportunity to serve because you can't help yourself, you can't stay away? Because you understand this is a special time of life for you. This is a special season where you have fewer distractions going on. You have more freedom, and you want to use it for the things of God. Is that your mentality? Is that how you look at this?

You know, to ask this another way, if you don't have the gift of singleness. If this is not for you, and you would like to be married, and you would like to find a husband, or you would like to find a wife, let me ask you this. What are you doing about how are you handling that? That's not an easy thing. I don't know if all the married people in our church can remember the dating years, but it's not easy. That's a hard time So, what are you doing with it? Are you reading book after book after book on this subject? Are you going to conference after conference after conference and making your checklists and making tests and telling people they don't measure up to the point that it's consuming you? Are you dwelling on it to the point that it's becoming an idol in your life? If you are, let me tell you, there's a simple answer to that. There's a simple solution. And that is that you need to show wisdom in this. You need to show some discretion. Every idea is not a good idea that's out there on dating. Every book is not a good book, every conference is not a good conference, you just need to go back to this. The Bible says the choice is up to you, whether you get married or not. Whether you stay single or not. The decision is up to you. God has given you the freedom to choose. The most important thing is why you do it. You need to do it all for His glory. You need to do it all so you can serve Him.

You know, in my studies this week, I came across a story of the time an evangelist posted a sign over his head that said "I'm a fool for Christ's sake." And as he walked down the street and went around town, everybody laughed at him. All the people mocked him until they saw the sign on

the back of his head that said, “Whose fool are you?” Friends, there's a lesson in there. There's a principle for us; and that is that there's nothing that we've been talking about this morning, that would not be considered foolish by the world. There's nothing that we said about marriage or singleness that would not be considered stupid by the culture; but that's okay. Doesn't matter to us. We're fools for Christ. Does that describe you this morning? Are you his fool?

Let me pray that you would be. That you would do it all for the Lord Jesus Christ. Let's pray.

Father, we do pray for Your help this morning in being fools for You. As we think about this subject, it's so interesting to talk about because it's all over movies, this is all over TV shows. It's all over, all around us in the world. We don't look at it like that anymore. We don't look at anything the way we used to because of Christ.

Father, our lives have been changed in a way that's compared as going from darkness to light, as going from death to life, as going from an old man to a new one. And that means we see this issue through new eyes, living eyes, eyes that are in the light. So, I pray for our church this morning. I pray for Your people, whether they be married or single, that they would look at their status in life through the eyes of Christ. We need to change how we look at all these things.

I pray, Lord, for those who are single this morning, that You would remind them of all these precious truths. Remind them that they stand among giants of the faith. For those who are married Lord will glorify You in that stage. But whichever one it would be, we want Your name to be exalted among us here today. Lord, we live in dark times. We live in difficult times. But Lord, we pray that would not distract us from the things You've called us to do, and where we need to live our lives. We need to go on living as Christians, so we can be salt and light in a crazy messed up world.

Lord, would You be glorified as we go on today. I pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.

Well, thank you for joining us this morning. That concludes our service here at Grace. If you would like to learn more about us, you can find us online at <https://gracefellowshipchilliwack.com/> or you can go to our YouTube page, just type in Grace Fellowship Chilliwack and all our material will show up there. For now may the Lord bless you and have a wonderful day.