

Why Singleness Truly Is a Gift Worth Embracing

There is something distinctly beautiful about a single woman wholeheartedly pursuing Jesus. When I watch single friends or leaders pour out their lives in service to Christ, I'm reminded that women are not defined by our relationships with men. Indeed, there is only one Man who defines us, and His love for us does not fluctuate with our ever-changing waistlines, wrinkles, or worries. To me, a godly single woman is living proof that a relationship with Jesus is the truest secret to lasting contentment (Phil. 4:11–13).

Yet over time my eyes have been opened to the unique suffering of singleness through conversations with close friends, comments written by True Woman readers, and discussions at conferences. I'm left thinking these two insufficient words—*I'm sorry*.

I'm sorry the church can feel like an ostracizing place for singles. I'm sorry we're not better at providing community and support. I'm sorry we stereotype singles as an extension of college ministry, when you come in all different stages of life. I'm sorry for insensitive comments and prying questions. I'm sorry for the way social media magnifies loneliness and for the moments when you've felt forgotten or unseen.

Certainly, singleness is not easy. And yet the Bible describes it as a gift. Have you ever wondered why? While discussing principles for marriage, Paul writes, "For I would that all men were even as I myself. But every man has his proper gift from God, one after this manner and another after that" (1 Cor. 7:7).

Why Is Singleness a Gift?

Paul offers two primary reasons for why singleness is a gift:

It reduces the potential for worldly heartache, and it increases the opportunity for undivided devotion to Christ. In verses 26–28, he goes on to write, “I suppose therefore that this is good because of the present distress, that it is good for a man to remain as he is. Are you committed to a wife? Do not seek to be uncommitted. Are you free from a wife? Do not seek a wife. But if you marry, you have not sinned. And if a virgin marries, she has not sinned. Nevertheless they will have trouble in this life, but I would spare you that.”

Reread the first line of that verse. What was the “present distress” facing the church in Corinth? I heard one speaker explain that the Corinthians were living in an immoral culture so hostile to Christianity that at times married Christians had to watch their own children thrown to the lions. No wonder Paul longed to spare his brothers and sisters from these intense troubles.

Even though the majority of believers in our day and age will never face such a degree of persecution, there is a reality in which married people still face many “worldly troubles.” A married woman’s heart is tethered to a husband and children whose lives and choices are unpredictable.

Just ask the woman raising a child with severe health problems or the woman broken over her husband’s addiction. Even married women who seem to have “picture-perfect” lives wrestle with countless concerns over their families every single day.

Paul knew this! Look at verses 32–34: “I prefer that you have no concern ... the unmarried woman cares for the things of the Lord, that she may be holy in body and in spirit. But she who is married cares for the things of the world, how she may please her husband.”

Paul isn’t saying that single life is a stroll in the park. His own laundry list of suffering is staggering (2 Cor. 11:23–28). Rather, he is saying that singleness lends itself

toward less cares in this world and therefore a greater opportunity for exclusive devotion to God.

It's simple math. Less people equals less concerns. Less schoolyard drama and parent-teacher meetings and health crises and hours spent resolving conflict or attending marriage and family counseling. In turn that means more time to pursue God's calling, to invest in others, to participate in that overseas mission trip, or run with that new ministry at church.

If Singleness Is a Gift, Can I Exchange It?

Perhaps you're thinking, *But I wouldn't mind some of those burdens if I could just have a family. Isn't trouble in this world preferable to loneliness?* Would it surprise you to know that many married women wrestle with the exact same discontentment in reverse? They ache for the freedom they see in the lives of their single friends. They believe anything would be preferable to the intense difficulty of marriage and childrearing.

The delusion of "if only" is unbiased—it haunts every single one of us. For years I thought my discontentment would float away if only I could graduate from college and snag my dream job. *If only I could get married. If only I could have children. If only those children would sleep through the night. If only, if only, if only . . .*

Guess what? Discontentment still floats around inside my heart, even as I type these words! The true secret to lasting joy will never be found in a man or a job or a baby or a beautiful house or enviable abs. We will only discover contentment when we bow our knee to God's plan for our life instead of idolizing the plan we wish He had chosen. We will only find joy when we believe that God's will is better than our own.

This is the heart of submission, and it goes hand-in-hand with

trust. Think of them as best friends. As we learn to trust Jesus, we learn to submit to Him. First we do it out of obedience and sheer discipline. Then we do it willingly. Then joyfully. Then one day eagerly. We long to submit to Jesus because we have come to learn that there is no safer, more joyful place to live than in the center of His perfect will.

How could you grow in trusting Jesus? What's one step you could take today? Could you repent of your distrust? Could you make a list of His faithfulness in your life? Could you memorize Scripture about God's character? Could you reach out to another godly woman for encouragement or accountability?

I cannot promise that His plan for your life or mine will be easy. I can't promise it will be the same plan we would've chosen for ourselves. But I can promise that He loves you, and whether you trust Him or not, *He is trustworthy.*

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