

Single and Happy

Delighting in God and Enjoying Singleness

Personal Story: I was scarred by relationships at an early age. I happened to be shy and did not like to engage in relationships with girls too much. I enjoyed playing sports and shining on the court. Then, the day came when I was struck by the beauty of another girl. I believe I was in 7th or 8th grade. My class took a field trip to Opryland Theme Park in Nashville, Tennessee. I was from the country, so any trip outside of my little town was a big deal. I remember my dad gave me around \$75. I was loaded for the trip and ready to have a great time with my friends. As a typical middle school guy, I was ready to find love. I thought I was going to find the woman of my dreams. There was another girl on the trip that took my heart away. Someone, through the gossip train, passed along that another girl was interested. I mounted my stallion and tried to appear as a knight in shining armor. The \$75 that dad had given me was used to play games and win my princess with stuffed animals and other fair-like prizes. Needless to say, by the end of the day, she dumped me. I can still remember that night like it was yesterday. I was sick. All I had was a few stuffed animals, some other cheap things I had won, and a broken heart. I had bunk beds, and I lay there most of the whole night. I didn't want to come out of my room. I was financially broke, ashamed I had spent all of my dad's hard-earned money, and lost the girl that I had been infatuated with for the day. I dated several other girls through high school and college with much of the same experience. Instead of investing time in God, family, and good friends, I lived to have one relationship after another until the Lord saved me at age 22 and changed my focus. He was all I needed, and He would bring someone into my life at the right time. My main goal became to give Him pleasure. I began serving at church, using my time to serve others at the local mission, and hung out with friends. I will not lie; there were times in my singleness when I would despair of ever meeting anyone to date or marry, but I learned to trust God. I remember having a conversation with my mother in my twenties. I was in my bedroom shooting basketball with a Nerf ball and a goal on the back of my closet door. My mom encouraged me to be patient and keep trusting. The Lord would have the right person for me, and I would know it when it happened. In the meanwhile, I learned that I needed to embrace and enjoy being single for the glory of God even if I was single my whole life.

Scripture Memory: Mark 12:30 And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment.

Theological Backdrop: God is Love

Scripture Text: Read Genesis 2: 4-25

God made us for relationships

Before we dig into our need for relationships, I want to explain the reason why God has made us to develop deep, lasting, and enjoying relationships. Within the Godhead, or Trinity, God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit have eternally existed in relationship with one another. There is

one God, yet three persons make up the Godhead.¹ This can be seen in the first verse of the Bible all the way to the end of the book of Revelation. God is personal. Actually before the foundation of the world, God enjoyed the company of Himself. Jesus states in John 17:24, *“Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world.”* This is a remarkable statement by Jesus and gives us a glimpse into the relationship the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit have enjoyed before time existed. It was a relationship of pure love, overflowing with life, and filled with the light of truth.

When God began creating the world, He made everything good.² This statement is made frequently in the first chapter of Genesis. Now, as a pop quiz, what was the first thing that was not good in scripture? If you guessed, the Fall of Man in Genesis 3, then you are close but that is not the correct answer. Actually Genesis 2:18 gives us the answer, *“And the LORD God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him.”* God made woman out of a rib from Adam’s side and brought her to Adam. God officiated or performed the first wedding ceremony. Genesis 2:23-25 says, *“And Adam said, This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man. 24 Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh. 25 And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed.”* Marriage between a man and a woman was God’s idea and is the bedrock to society.

Now, you might be thinking, I am not married yet, so why do I need to understand all of these things about the Trinity, Creation, and the first marriage? It is important to know the truth and understand the reason why things are the way they are. When we were three or four years old, we would ask questions about everything. We wanted to know the answers. However, my dad used to have a magnet on our refrigerator that said, *“Hire a teenager while they still know everything.”* It made me mad at times, because I often thought I knew more than my parents because I was in high school studying subjects that sounded highly intellectual—trigonometry, geometry, and physics. I wish I would have listened more, because my parents knew more than I thought they knew. A lot of their information came from the ultimate source of truth—the Bible.

Prior to marriage, we have a glimpse into Adam’s life as a single man. I want to point out at least three things he was consumed with.

#1 Adam Was a Work of God.

Adam was created in the image of God and found his identity in who God said he was. Today, it is easy to look into the world and try to find our identity. I struggled with my identity in school, because I was lost and didn’t know God. Second, I thought I was accepted because I could

¹ Genesis 1:1, Deuteronomy 6:4, Genesis 1:26, 11:7, Matthew 3:16-17, 28:19, 2 Corinthians 13:14

² Genesis 1:4, 10, 12, 18, 21, 25, 31

make good grades and excelled in athletics. My life was totally wrapped up in the wrong things, and I did not have the most important relationship in the world—one with God. There is a huge difference between being the Creator and being part of creation. Therefore, the ultimate desire of a person should be to give God pleasure. Revelation 4:11 says, *“Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created.”* Adam’s responsibility was what Psalms 29:2 declares, *“Give unto the LORD the glory due unto his name; worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness.”* God is glorious and the most beautiful person in the universe due to His holiness. Adam was set apart for God, and this brought great joy and delight to the heart of God. As a single person, God desires to be your greatest Treasure and He wants you to realize that He made you to love Him and to reflect His glory.

#2 Adam Had a Work to Do

Before Adam ever laid eyes on the most beautiful woman in the world, God had him busy working in the garden. God had planted a garden, and He placed Adam there to tend and cultivate it. Adam was also highly intelligent considering God brought all of the animals to him to name them. The next time you go to the zoo and look at all of the animals, think about the one who named all of them. Adam was busy doing the work of the Lord prior to his marriage to Eve.

Amazingly, the Apostle Paul explained the single life in this way in the New Testament, *“But I would have you without carefulness. He that is unmarried careth for the things that belong to the Lord, how he may please the Lord: But he that is married careth for the things that are of the world, how he may please his wife”* (1 Corinthians 7:32-33). Notice Paul says that the unmarried or single can devote all of their time to the work of the Lord. There are some great advantages to being single and happy in the Lord. The first great advantage is freedom with time. Now that I am married and have children, I do not have the freedom with my time to do all the things I used to be able to do. Second, there is the responsibility to provide for my wife and children. I often do not have the flexibility of doing some of the things a single person can do. Third, more money is needed to survive as a family man than as a single man.

Ultimately, I do not want to scare you away from being married. I just want you to see the realities and differences in the use of time, responsibilities, and finances. I believe God calls us to singleness, and when the time is right, He will call a person into a marriage. Both singleness and marriage can be used to the glory of God. I was almost 27 before I got married. I am so thankful that the Lord caused me to wait on Him and the right person, because I did not know who I was or what I needed in high school or college. Much of that could be due to the fact that I did not get saved until I was 22. Then, I tried to start working on #1 above. I discovered what my identity was in Jesus Christ and learned to love Him and be happy.

Once I realized that my greatest joy would be in knowing God personally and intimately, I began praying and asking the Lord why He put me on this planet. He had a purpose specifically designed for me. I took great encouragement in Ephesians 2:8-10 which states, *“For by grace*

are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them." My life did not unfold before me overnight, but as I strived to walk by faith doors began to open and God's purpose for me started becoming clearer. God's overall purpose in my life is still unfolding, and it is a challenging and exhilarating ride.

#3 Adam Had the Word to Obey

Before the first wedding ceremony, God gave Adam specific instructions in Genesis 2:16-17 *"And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die."* Adam walked with God daily. He could look out and marvel at creation. He had a conscience that only knew what was good. Although Adam was created perfect and upright, God still gave him His word. It was one commandment. Adam had the freedom to enjoy the fullness of life and all the fruit of the trees. However, God wanted to remind Adam of who was in charge. God was the Creator and knew what was best for Adam, and He knows what is best for us if we will listen.

Why do you think God gave Adam one commandment? I believe the answer could be summed up in what Jesus told His disciples, *"If ye love me, keep my commandments"* (John 14:15). How important is God's Word in your life as a single person? Do you read it daily, weekly, or monthly? Our attitude towards God's Word often reflects our attitude towards God. If we neglect God's Word, we distance ourselves from Him through sin. Do you remember what happened to Adam when he disobeyed God's Word? He was filled internally with guilt. He was ashamed. He went hiding or running from God in fear. He tried to cover his sin up with fig leaves. Then, when God called Adam out, he did not take responsibility for his actions and blamed Eve for what he had done. Sin distorted Adam's relationship with God and Eve and continues to cause problems in our relationships.

Up to this point, we have looked at three important aspects about Adam's life prior to marriage.

1. Adam Was a Work of God.
2. Adam Had a Work to Do.
3. Adam Had the Word to Obey.

As a single person, these should be three goals to pursue. Here are a few questions to ask yourself:

- Do I know God? Have I been born again by the Spirit of God? Do I have peace with God?
- Am I delighting in God as my greatest treasure?
- Am I finding my identity in God rather than in the magazines and television shows?
- Am I serving God in some capacity?

- What is my attitude toward God's Word?
- Do I read God's Word regularly?
- Have I been disobeying God's Word?
- Am I unhappy? If so, do I have known sin in my life?

Now, if you are single, are you happy? God desires His children to be happy, but our happiness does not come through self-centeredness or pride. Our happiness and joy in the Lord will be based upon our obedience to God and our love for the things God loves. Now, for the remainder of this lesson, let's test ourselves to see how good of lovers that we are.

Am I a good lover?³ (An exercise to test your love for God and others)

In Matthew 22:37-40, Jesus explained the greatest commandments, *“Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.”* These commandments are a summation of the Ten Commandments. Let’s see how well we are doing in being “loving” toward God and people.

1. I love God more than anything in this world. He has all authority, so I submit to Him and His Word all the way, right away, and with a joyful heart.
2. I love God and try to protect my heart from idols. Most of us do not bow down to metal or wooden statues of gods, but as a teenager, I used to bow down to a basketball, my car, money, and relationships with girls. My grandfather taught me, “Anything you put before God is an idol.” He said this at his kitchen table when I was looking through the classified ads in the paper. I wanted a car when I turned sixteen and was obsessed with getting one.
3. I love God’s name and live each day to give Him a good reputation.
4. I love to go to church to worship God and reflect on His goodness.
5. I love my parents and respect their authority. I obey them all the way, right away and with a joyful heart realizing God placed them in my life to instruct me.
6. I love life and drive all hatred and animosity from my heart. I quickly repent when I express unrighteous anger toward others whether through outbursts or by allowing it to boil in my heart. I am quick to apologize to others when I wrong them. I am quick to forgive when others offend me.
7. I love the idea of waiting to be married in order to have sex with my spouse. I want to save myself for one person.
8. I love to respect other people’s property and things. I do not want to steal anything of anyone else’s. Anytime I do use something that is someone else’s, I like to return it in just as good or better condition.
9. I love the truth and try to speak it in love. I do not like listening to gossip or spreading it around. I do not like to talk bad about people.
10. I love to be content with the things I have. I am happy for others when they get new things. I do not harbor jealousy in my heart over other people’s possessions.

Many of the relationships that we start with the opposite sex while growing up end in disaster. Emotional pain and scars leave their marks on our hearts. The reason is due to what we define as love. For the most part, infatuations and lusts are what our world refer to as love. In First Corinthians 13, the Apostle Paul described the importance of love in the local church. These principles are true in many ways. In the Ten Commandments, we were able to see the things that God loves and expects us to love. Now, let’s see how God describes His kind of love.

1. Love is patient (suffers long).
 - a. Love is not impatient with others.
2. Love is kind.
 - a. Love is not mean or hurtful to others.
3. Love does not envy.

³ Part of this idea came from *Biblical Principles of Love, Sex, and Dating: High School Version* (Faith Resources, Lafayette, Indiana) p. 13-20.

- a. Love is not jealous when others get things they want. Love is happy to see others blessed and excited.
4. Love does not boast (vaunteth not itself).
 - a. Love does not say, "I am #1." Instead of being self-centered, love considers others better than themselves. Love does not make others look bad or make them feel stupid.
5. Love is not arrogant (puffed up).
 - a. Love is not full of pride. Love focuses on how good God is and how merciful He is to His people. Love does not take the credit for getting to where they are. Love is quick to admit its mistakes and to seek forgiveness when necessary. Love is humble.
6. Love is not rude (behave itself unseemly).
 - a. Love is not disrespectful, but polite, courteous, and well-mannered. Love opens the doors for others, allows others to go first, and listens when others are speaking.
7. Love does not insist on its own way (seeketh not her own, self-seeking).
 - a. Love considers the desires and wishes of others first. Love does not try to manipulate others in order to get their way through temper tantrums, the silent treatment, or hurtful words.
8. Love is not irritable or resentful (is not easily provoked).
 - a. Love is understanding and takes a lot to cause one to be angry. Love is not nit-picky or cause people to walk on eggshells around them. Love does not sweat the small stuff.
9. Love is not resentful (thinketh no evil).
 - a. Love is forgiving and does not hold grudges.
10. Love does not rejoice in wrongdoing.
 - a. Love does not delight in hearing about sinful behavior. Love does not keep a list of wrongs. Love hurts when sin is present.
11. Love rejoices in the truth.
 - a. Love is joyful when the truth reigns in other people's lives. When someone does the right thing or good things happen, it causes the heart to rejoice.
12. Love bears all things.
 - a. Love does not give up in difficulty, but perseveres through all trials.
13. Love believes all things.
 - a. Love does not believe the worst about a person or situation.
14. Love hopes all things.
 - a. Love does not encourage others to give up. Love believes there is always hope, because with God, all things are possible.
15. Love endures all things.
 - a. Love does not stop loving. Love perseveres and continues to do what is right no matter what.

Now, we have looked at God's standards of love. If you are honest with yourself, there is a lot of room for growth in all of our hearts. In my twenties, many of my college friends were getting

married. I often asked them the question, "What are you learning most about being married?" Many of them told me, "I didn't realize how selfish I was." I want to encourage you to learn to love God's way.

- Find your identity in Him. You are a work of God. Come to Jesus and be saved if you are lost.
- Find out ways you can serve others in your singleness. You have a work to do.
- Find out ways to love God and others by reading and obeying God's word. You have a word to obey.

Ultimately, embrace your singleness and learn to be happy in the Lord. If it is His will, He will bring the right person to you at the right time. The goal of life is not marriage, but it is to please the Lord.