

Marriage and Singleness: The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 14 June 2015

Preacher: Tobin Miller

[0 : 00] Okay, so I want to start this story today because we're in this book of Corinthians. And I'm going to do it in a way that's going to seem random, probably more random than what I normally do. But hopefully it will make sense as we go on.

If it doesn't, then just forgive me. What I want to do is I want to start off with a story in Scripture. And then I want to ask us some questions. And then we're going to get to the Scripture for today, which is an awesome passage and a fun passage.

The Scripture today, the story I want to share is in Luke 10. So Jesus was going through the villages of Capernaum and Judea, and he was teaching. And we're told in Luke 10 that this lawyer came up to him to cause some trouble.

And in Greek, actually, it says the lawyer came up, and he wanted to test Jesus to show flaws. And so he wanted to ask Jesus some questions. And so he asked Jesus this question. He says, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?

Basically, what he's asking Jesus is, okay, how can I make God happy with me? And what does God expect from me that I'll make him happy? And Jesus answered him and says, well, what does it say in the Torah, God's Word?

[1 : 07] And the lawyer, without exception, he just said it right off. He said, you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind. And you shall love your neighbor as yourself.

And Jesus looked at him and said, you're right. Now go do that. So a question I have for us to begin our time off is, what if everything you knew about singleness and about love and about sex and about marriage, what if everything you knew was disordered?

What if everything you knew and you thought you knew about these topics was fractured? What if it was corrupted?

I mean, I'm not talking like 100% corruption, but what if at the core of what we thought we knew about marriage and sex and singleness and dating, what if at its foundation we were just, we weren't very good?

What would you do? Maybe an easier way, I think sometimes, because I ask this question, maybe an easier way to ask it would be, or a different way would be, what if within your profession right now, your job, what you're doing in your job, everything you're doing in your job, what if you found out that within your job, in your profession, that everything you knew or you thought you knew was disordered or fractured or broken?

[2 : 34] What if you, and not like 100% broken, but let's just say what you're doing right now as a doctor or a lawyer or whatever you're doing in your world teaching, what if only 75% of what you knew was correct?

And there was a 25% part that was corrupted and broken, and you knew that if you continued on the path in your job and in your profession, you knew that if you continued doing the things the way that you did, that you would eventually hurt a lot of people.

And not just for your generation, but you would hurt a lot of people for future generations. And that you would eventually hurt yourself. What would you do? How would you function?

The Corinthian church was in this situation. I mean, we've been going through this book of 1 Corinthians, and we've been doing 5 and 6 and 7, and they're like these hot potatoes that were bouncing around, and they are just intense, and it's so comforting to be able to come back to God's Word and say, this is what God says, and say, this is what Tobin says, because Tobin's a mess.

But I was talking to a local pastor this week, and we were talking about these things, and he surprised me. He said, you know, I've been listening to the sermons of Watermark, because I wanted to hear what you guys are going to do about 1 Corinthians, and I wanted to hear that. [3 : 50] I said, oh, really? And he goes, yeah, this idea of accountability and community and how it works together, and we're all in the same boat. And he said, you know, if I preached that sermon in my church, people would leave.

It would be too intense. It would be too personal, and people would feel like I was being too, just in their life, and they would leave. And so I wanted to share that, because I don't want you to leave, okay?

I don't want you to leave, you know? But there's just something about this, as God's word offends us. And if I offend you, that's a different story. You come up, and you can just punch me.

But if God's word offends us, then we have to ask ourselves, why does God's word offend us? I mean, because God's word is meant to challenge us and to rebuke us and to exhort us and to heal us, and it's meant to show us as we come to God's word that we're worshipping God, the creator of the universe, that Jesus is the hero of the story and not Tobin.

But God is at the center of everything and not Tobin. And what we see in this whole book of God's word and in these stories is that God wants to have an intimate relationship with you.

[5 : 00] Did you know that? God wants to have an intimate relationship with you. And most people don't get that.

Most people don't understand that. When we think of intimate, we think of, like last week, we think of sex, and we think of things like that. But, you know, the Bible says that the most intimate thing that you're ever going to do, the most intimate experience that you're ever going to have is when you come face to face with your creator in heaven.

It's going to be better than sex. It's going to be perfect. You and God and Christ married, and you're going to be perfect and holy and complete. And so last week I was in a bookstore, and literally I was walking down the bookstore, and this girl had this on the back of her shirt.

So I took a picture. God is better than sex. Now, I didn't, I was, it's like one of those awkward moments, you know, she has this long hair kind of dream, you know, floating back on her back, and I see it, I catch it on my eye, and I'm like, oh, wow, I got to take a picture of that because that's what we were talking about last week.

But I have my camera behind her, you know, and she's looking at the books, and I feel kind of like I'm a predator or something, right? So I almost tried to touch her hair and kind of move it off because it was kind of, and I said, hey, I'm so sorry, I know this is so weird, I'm not a freak, I have, I'm married, I have kids, but can I get a picture of your shirt?

[6 : 16] And I looked at that, and I thought about that, and I said, wow, that's pretty interesting, you know, because that's what we're talking about, right? I don't know if she believes it or not, I don't know where she got it. I thought we'd just get everybody, get a watermark shirt like that, front and back.

God is better than sex, and we just, everybody in the church, if you remember, you have to wear it for one week, right, or something like that, I don't know. But, you know, we saw last week that the church was struggling with sex.

Not watermark, but the church of Corinthians, it was struggling with sex, and there was prostitutes everywhere, and people were having sex, and we are told by historians that the closest you could get to God was by having sex with a prostitute in the temple.

That was the most religious experience that you could have, and we talked last week about Genesis and how God actually made sex and intimacy and relationships, and nowadays people say Christians are down on those things, but in reality, when Paul speaks and Jesus speaks, he's actually elevating these things to levels that are much greater than the world understands, and we looked in the Hebrew when it says to know, yada, to know your spouse, it means not just a physical sexual intimacy, but it means a meshing of your life and of your soul.

It means you're mentally and you're socially and you're physically and you're economically. It means all of your life is together with your partner, husband and wife in marriage. Sex, you know, relationship is just there.

[7 : 37] It's just your soul is bound to that person, and that's why God takes sexual immorality so hard and massively. He's disappointed with it because it's not just having sex with another person, but what you're doing is you're destroying your soul, and your soul is made in the image of God,

and so we talked about that last week, and we talked about how this idea of this sin, and this sin comes into us, and it started at the garden, and it invades our DNA, and it's in everything that we do, and it tempts us, and it longs, and it draws us, and it disorders everything in our life and how we think, and the Corinthian church was just falling apart because everything in their lives was disordered.

They didn't understand sex. They didn't understand marriage. They didn't understand dating. They didn't understand singleness, and instead of going to God's word, they were looking in the government and society, and they were saying, what does the government say about this, and what can we do these things, and they were just getting even more disordered like a lot of us do.

They went to Oprah like a lot of us do. I don't know what the big thing is today, but my day was Dr. Phil and Oprah, and those are how you learned what sex and relationships were all about, but Paul says there's something different, and that's what God has to teach us, and today, he's talking to this group of, so last week, he's talking to this group of people who were sex-crazed.

Everything they did was sex, sex, sex, sex, sex, sex, sex, sex, sex, sex, sex. They would disagree with that shirt that God is better than sex, and this week, he's talking about this other group of people who basically say no sex, so I don't know how he's a pastor in this church because I'm a pastor, and I think watermark is 300 or 400.

Depends on how many people come on a Sunday, but Corinthian church was only like 150 people, at least as far as I can figure out at this time, and they had all these massive divisions of sex and no sex and slaves, and it seemed like it was just a mess, and so this group comes in on chapter seven, and they're saying no sex.

[9 : 23] Sex is bad. Sex is carnal. The spirit is what you want to look at, and what you see in the church is it just disturbs everybody. It disturbs the singles and the marrieds and the divorces and the widows, and everybody's just freaking out, and all of a sudden in verse one, they say this statement, and it's not what Paul says.

It's what they said. It's good for a man not to touch a woman. It's basically saying that it's good for a man not to have sex with a woman, ever, not even in marriage, and they think when they write this to Paul because Paul's reading their letter, and he's writing down a response, which again, I don't understand how he does it because I get in trouble when I respond to somebody's email, and I don't say one word correctly, but Paul is talking about these massive issues, and he's just responding to people about these things, and they think that he's going to be happy because he's single, and he's celibate, and he's intense, but he's actually disappointed, and the amazing thing to me about this passage, again, like last week, that Paul doesn't come in and just slam them and then beat them up, but he kind of just gently and carefully and lovingly and compassionately nurtures them and talks to them about what's going on, and he allows the gospel to come into our lives, and it reorders our disorderedness, and so Paul does that, and he starts to talk today about the singles and sex and marriage, and you know, to be honest with you, when you look at chapter seven, you've got to realize something, guys.

People are coming to faith out of a society which is probably the most immoral and out-of-control society in the world, and these people were coming to faith, and they were asking questions just like the rich young ruler.

They're asking questions like, how can I make God happy? What does God want out of me? How can I really serve the Lord? What do I need to do to change my lifestyle and to honor God and please him?

I mean, these are all, they're all great questions. Maybe they're all questions that we should be asking, but the assumption behind every one of these people's questions is that wherever they are, wherever they were at their stage of life, whether they were single or married or divorced or whatever kind of lifestyle they were living, whether they were free man or slave or poor or circumcised or uncircumcised or a teacher or a managing director or a student or a pilot or a housewife, whatever they were living now, they just assumed that they weren't doing the right thing.

[11 : 32] They just assumed that wherever they were, that that's not where God wanted them.

They thought that there was something better for them, more blessings, more great things. And so they were looking for the next big thing. They were looking for a total blessing.

They were looking for true happiness. They were looking for a lot of wealth. They were looking for health. They were looking for victory and all these things. And what you see throughout this church is that no one was content.

No one was happy with where God had them. No one understood contentment. They didn't understand what that meant. And so Paul is lovingly in chapter seven going to address these issues again to all these group of people.

And I want to just briefly, in the time that we have, just talk about these things. And I want to look at what he says to singles. And I want to look at what he says to marrieds. And I want to look at how we change.

What is it we're to do? How do we have the power to change? So what does he say to singles? What does he say to married people? And then how do we have the power to change? So first, the singles.

[12:29] So for those of you who are in singles, this is what Paul's saying. I was a single for 35 years of my life before trouble walked in the door. That's what he says. Verse 28, you're going to have trouble, right?

So I'm hoping that trouble doesn't come walking in here now as I'm teaching on these things. But so I was a single. And this is what Paul says. He's talking about these issues of man not touching a woman. And this idea of no sex turns into this huge discussion about celibacy.

And what does it mean to honor and serve the Lord? And Paul, it's just amazing because in verses 7, 8, and 9, he takes that question and he kind of redirects the energy into single people's lives.

And now Paul was single when he wrote this. Now, I don't know if Paul was ever married. It seems like there's a pretty good chance that he was married. Because if he was a rabbi, if he was a rabbi of rabbis, if he was a Pharisee, you had to be married.

And so we don't know what happened to Paul's wife. Maybe because Paul was on the track to become the man, right? He was going to be the man in Judaism. And so maybe when he came to faith and he gave all that up and he just started following a bunch of crazy men in the desert, his wife just said, I'm out of here.

[13:43] This isn't what I signed on for. Or maybe she died. We don't know. But what we know now is that Paul is single. And as he talks to the singles in his church, what he does is he does something that was never done in the history of the world before.

And what he does is he basically validates singleness. He takes a single person who before, from every culture in the world, is kind of smashed down.

And what he does is he lists the benefits for staying single. I mean, he says to every one of them, I wish that you could be like I was. Now, when we read this, and you and I read this, we go, you know, what's the big deal?

But in his day, it was a massive deal because no one ever talked about that. No one ever talked like that. I mean, if you took out a questionnaire for going into a country or whatever they did back then, there was never a box, click off, or singleness.

The only person who clicked off for singleness was a prostitute because singleness was not valued in any culture because in every culture up until this time, you had to have a family. You had to have a heritage.

[14:45] You had to put down your land. You had to be able to pass things off to people. And so when he talks about this idea that there's a different family, that there's a spiritual family that we're responsible for, and that this spiritual family actually has a trump card over a physical, biological family, when Paul says these things, everybody is in shock.

No one would ever have heard that before, but he says it. He says, you know, there are these incredible values and things of being single, and one of these things is that you have this spiritual family around you, and you have this ability to spend time with them.

Now, if you were to ask me, and I'm being very honest here, so please, no recording. You could tell Christina and I talked to her before, but as you've asked me as a single for 35 years, and you say, Tobin, what's the benefits for being single?

I would say things like, well, I get to do whatever I want to do. I get to use my money the way I want. I can buy a watch whenever I want. I don't have to ask anybody. No one has demands on my life. I don't have kids asking me. When I'm working on something, they don't come in and bother me. I mean, you know, that's, I just want to read. I want to be able to have two minutes in the toilet by myself without a kid opening the door and saying, hey, Dad, what are you doing?

[16:02] I don't know. I'm just kind of sitting on a toilet, right? My clothes off. But, you know, so as a single, I could do that. I didn't have to worry about my money.

I didn't have to worry about my, I had more energy. I had less demands. I had more ability to be intimate with people if I wanted to. My options were open. I didn't have to make decisions and plan them out.

And so when I looked at my life as a single, I was just self-focused. The focus is on Tobin and who I am and what I want and what I need. And the focus was all on me.

I don't know if you're like that as a single in here. But I was. But in verse 32 and 33, what Paul says is that's not the benefit of being single.

The benefit of being single is that you have a greater freedom to serve the Lord. And you have a greater freedom to serve this thing called this spiritual family around you. You have less things to occupy your thoughts and your desires.

[17:00] You have this freedom to think about other people. And so when Paul talks about the values of singleness, it's other-focused. He's saying if you're married, you have obligations to your spouse.

But if you're single, you don't have obligations to your spouse or your kids. And you just have a lot of free time. Do we? I mean, in verses 6 through 9, he says that Paul actually comes in and he says, hey, if it's a single person, you're actually less distracted.

You're less preoccupied about yourself. You're able to focus on serving people and serving God's kingdom. And as you serve people and serve God's kingdom and this freedom, you actually honor the Lord. Serving others is what God has called us to.

And so in this passage, and I want you to go back to it tonight because Paul takes singleness and he just lifts it up here. I mean, he lifted it up to women last week. He lifted up sex last week.

And this week he just says, if you're single, you're no longer a second-class citizen. You're no longer not a citizen. You're a first-class citizen in God's kingdom. Now, no one ever heard that before, guys.

[18:07] I never heard that as a single. Actually, you know, just a little secret for you guys is that, you know, in heaven, there's not gonna be any marriage. So that thing that singles were so anxious in and were pursuing, it's just for 20 or 30 years and then eternity without marriage.

Don't tell anybody this, but you know, in heaven, there's not gonna be any sex. Now, a lot of people freak out when they hear that, but what he says is that when we get to heaven that we're gonna be married to God and that our souls will be meshed so intimately with him that whatever we experience, we're gonna have all over our body, God is better than sex because that's gonna be true.

So I didn't understand this as a single. Then one day as a single Christian, I was in church and an older guy grabbed me and pulled me to the side. I will never forget the day that this happened because I was kind of one of those singles where I showed up for certain things, I did other things and I was okay kind of with my commitments, but sometimes I wasn't really okay with my commitments and I found something better to do, I would do it.

And this guy basically just kind of laid into me and he said, Tobin, you have to be one of the most self-focused, selfish, self-centered people I know.

And I was like, whoa, I don't know if I'll come back here next week. And then he reminded me that I'm part of this spiritual family and he reminded me that God has something for me to do in this spiritual family and he's told me that as long as I am a single in this family that I could have this incredible heritage with the people in the church.

[19:46] You know, I never heard that before. This guy who I really respected told me that I could be more of a father to some of the children than their parents are. because often they're neglected by their parents.

And just a high, how are you doing in leading a Sunday school might change a kid's life. He told me that I could be more of a friend to most of the marrieds and singles in the church because most people didn't have many friends and they were afraid of sharing things in their heart.

And he basically just chewed out my butt. But afterwards, I was so thankful that someone loved me enough to point out error in my life.

So I got to ask this guy, you know the question's coming, the question is this, do most of the singles in the church use their energy in free time serving the Lord and God's people?

or do they use their energy in their free time on themselves? And Paul says that one of the great benefits that you have as a single person is that God has given you this great opportunity to minister to this family that's eternal and that you will see them in heaven?

[21 : 10] How are we doing? Again, this was revolutionary for me. I just was just, you know, I was, I don't know, the British say I was gobsmacked or something like that.

I don't know, is that a British term or Australian term? Colin will tell me later if I messed it up. I love you. But you know, and that when I heard those things, I realized that as a single person God has a role for us and it's not a second class role or it's not a role but it's the first class role within God's kingdom.

And Paul says to the singles in this church and to all the churches, rejoice. God has you right where he wants you. Right where you are is where God has called you.

All these people in this chapter wanted to move out because they wanted something better but what Paul is trying to say to the singles and to the marrieds is that where you are is where God has you and he wants you to serve and he wants you to love and he wants you to take care of the people around you and don't be in such a hurry to get married guys.

Don't be so eager to do it. I remember as a young pastor one of the first churches I was in, Christina and I basically got six newly married couples together and we were kind of discipling them and hanging out with them and they were all married less than three years and within a year three or four of the six were divorced and they'd only been married for three years but because they hadn't done singleness well they couldn't do marriage well and Paul says there's a direct correlation to that verse 28 but if you marry you haven't sinned so it's not a sin to be married guys but be careful because if you marry you're going to have trouble and he's trying to spare you.

[23 : 08] Now all the married people after I said this should be saying amen. Right? Trouble. Right. I can mark that down. I don't know. I mean you know there's still things I'm trying to understand about Christina.

We're married 17 years and there's still trouble in our lives I'm trying to figure out things like you know when your wife comes in and she says the light in the bathroom is out.

And I go okay. And then she gets really frustrated. And then I go okay okay. Tell me that again. The light in the bathroom is out.

I'm like okay so you want me to go change it? No no no I'm not telling you that. I just want you to know. Trouble. So Paul is saying to singles he's saying hey guys as a single don't waste your singleness.

Because you have great opportunities to minister to people and to love people and I think for sure there are going to be many many spiritual children in heaven that will be lived out by people who are single and just sharing and pouring out their lives.

[24 : 18] Paul goes on and he says to marrieds okay so singles are you okay? You can punch me later okay? Where's your focus? Is it on yourself or is it on others and people around you?

To Paul in the marriage he says this in verses 11 and 12 and 20 and 24 he says to the married people hey don't be so eager to become single. Don't look at the single's lives and say oh you're missing out on something.

because the Lord has you right where he wants you the Lord has made you right where you are and the best way that you can honor him is to serve and to take care of your spouse. Now you don't understand again the depth of what he's saying here.

It's counter cultural, it's revolutionary, no one's ever said that before because in the Greek culture and in the Roman culture and the Jewish culture marriage was terrible. I mean marriage, the institution of marriage was at the point of collapse when Paul and Jesus are teaching.

In any of those cultures so the Jewish guy every day he got up and prayed if he was a good Jewish guy he would say this oh Lord I thank you I thank you that you haven't made me a Gentile dog, an Australian or a woman.

[25 : 32] So there's something about the Jewish culture that women and Australian were not looked out as very good. But you see that over and over, I'm teasing, they didn't know Australia back then but they killed all their prisoners before they sent them away so but I'm going to get in trouble, I know.

But the Jewish guy thought that women were like dogs. Seneca who was a very famous Roman, if you ever take Aladdin, if you ever read any Roman history you're always going to read Seneca, he's an orator and he said this, he said women are to be married, to be divorced and they're divorced, to be married and that's all that women are good for.

In his day when you signed a legal contract, you didn't sign a date on the contract. What you actually signed was who your husband was because the husbands change so frequently and wives change so frequently.

Jerome, one of the early church fathers, he told this story that there was a woman in his church and she had had 23 husbands and the husband that she was with now, she was that guy's 21st wife. And so divorce was just rampant throughout all of the empire and through all the generations and so Paul comes in and he says these words, he says, hey, remain where you're called. Serve your spouse.

[26 : 47] Marriage is holy. I mean, he elevates women, he elevates marriage, he takes this radical stance which is never before taken in the history of the world and he says all these things are good and he actually says if you want to honor the Lord, if you want to make God happy, you take care of your spouse.

You meet their needs, you be with them. If you look at verses two through six, he's talking to the married people and after he talks about that issue of not touching a woman, he warns us. He warns us if you're a married person in here, he said if you're a married person in here, your view of marriage and sex is disordered. That your view of marriage and sex is broken and that you and me, if you're married, you're always going to struggle with selfishness and you're always going to struggle with pride.

And this is what he says which is so, kills me. He says, Tobin, you're going to be tempted to intentionally withhold what your spouse needs.

You ever done that? You ever intentionally withheld what your spouse needs? I have.

[28 : 09] Christian and I have beginning arguments and discussions and in my mind, I know, okay, she's a woman, she's made this way and I don't say that in a bad way, I say it in a great way because she's much greater than I am. And I know, okay, so she doesn't really need intimacy, physical intimacy like I do, but she needs relationships and she needs caring and she needs gentleness and she needs to know that I'm with her, she needs to know I'm for her, she needs to know that I can talk to her.

And I get angry with her. You know what sometimes I do? I just don't talk to her. I'm like, I'll show her. She messed with me, I'll mess with her back. See how you feel you don't talk for two days. You walk in the house. I know, am I the only married person who's ever done this? Your wife says, how are you doing? He said, good. And you walk past her. What's going on?

Nothing. And Paul says that because of this brokenness and because of this disorder in our life, we're going to be tempted to withhold what our spouse needs.

I mean, he tells us that marriage is God's greatest example to a lost world of two broken people coming together and melding and molding their lives together together on all levels.

[29 : 25] But that you and I are going to always struggle with contentment. And you and I are always going to struggle with selfishness. And you and I are always going to struggle with having our needs the way we want them met.

And what he actually says in this passage, listen to this guys, verse 6, 5, and 6. He says, Tobin, as you withhold what your wife needs, what you're actually doing to that relationship is you're allowing Satan to come in.

You're allowing Satan to come in and you're allowing him to destroy your marriage and your relationship. And you know what, Tobin? You're not just destroying your marriage and your relationship. You're destroying yourself. And you think that you're getting what you want, but what you're actually doing is you're dishonoring the Lord.

Because as married people, God calls us, Paul challenges us to take care of each other. I don't need to go into a lot of detail, what your spouse needs, what they don't need.

You know that. My prayer is that you would think about what that means. Paul says that you and I were always going to be tempted as married people to be self-centered.

[30 : 42] That you and I, as married people, are always going to be tempted to not feel contentment. And if we allow that to fester in our hearts like this church was doing, if we deprive our spouses, if we don't do the things that they need, then we are destroying ourselves.

And we're dishonoring the Lord. Paul goes on in verse 5 and he says, you know what? If you're a healthy couple, you don't withhold intimacy from each other.

If you're a healthy couple, you don't withhold intimacy from each other because you know that what the other person needs, whatever that is in that marriage. And if you withhold it, you're hurting them. And if you hurt them, you're hurting yourself.

Did you hear what I said? If you hurt them, you're hurting yourself. And so Paul is talking to this church that is disoriented and freaking out and falling apart and fractured and full of sin and selfishness and lack of contentment.

And he's saying, hey guys, if you want to serve the Lord, if you want to make the Lord happy, you serve your wife, you serve your husband.

[32 : 02] You take care of them. You outwardly focus instead of yourself. One of my biggest struggles as a married person is the words that come to my mind.

I deserve this. Or I need this. And I need this. And they haven't given it to me. And that's wrong. And Paul says if we do that in our marriages, we're going to destroy each other. So Paul goes on and he says at the end of this to singles and to marrieds, he says that we all, we're always going to struggle with ourselves.

Singles and marrieds, you're always going to struggle with pride. You're always going to struggle with not being content. You're always going to struggle with getting instead of giving. You're going to struggle with life and circumstances.

You're going to want to change your life and your circumstances. But you know one of the things the Bible says? God really isn't concerned about what your job is. I mean, if you're a prostitute, yeah. If you're a pimp or you're a hit man, yeah, that's a bad job.

[33 : 12] Okay? I'll just say that all right now. But for most of us, our jobs really aren't what God's focus is. The external. What God is mostly focused on is your heart.

He's worried about the internal. And so everything God's going to do to us, guys, is to make our hearts different and to change us. So if you're a single in here, this is what Paul says in his passage.

Paul says, use your time, use your energy, use your capacity, and serve him, and serve God, not Paul, serve God, and serve others. He says to the singles in here, be careful because there's nothing that has the capacity to scar your soul more than having sex outside of marriage.

And there are a lot worse things than not being married. And the biggest one I've found as a pastor and a counselor is marrying the wrong person. That's a lot worse than not getting married, guys. So be careful. Because if you're single and you want to honor the Lord, you're going to do that by serving him, serving others. And if you do that, God promises that he's going to meet you where you need to be met.

[34 : 27] I don't know what you think about God's word, but I hold it very high. And when God promises us something, you can better bet that he's going to deliver on that. And he's saying that if you serve others and you serve him, he's going to take care of you.

Now as a married, he says, almost the exact same thing. He says, now if you're married, stay married if at all possible. And they had some weird stuff going on in this church. They had stuff in this church that Jesus never even experienced, right?

Because they had people coming to faith and then the spouse wasn't in faith and there's all this tension. Jesus didn't even have that happen because he was the faith. And when he left, then people started talking about the gospel.

And so Paul is trying to navigate these things. But he says, if you're married, try as much as you can to stay married. He says, use your time and your energy and your capacity to serve God and serve your spouse.

Take care of your spouse. Focus on them and not yourself. And then he warns us. He says, be careful because there's nothing that has the capacity to scar your soul more than harming your spouse and running away from your marriage.

[35 : 43] Did you hear what he said? There's nothing that has the capacity to scar your soul more than harming your spouse and running away from your marriage.

One last thing. We're done. How do we do this? I mean, when I hear this and I've been reading it and I'm thinking about it, I'm like, this just seems too hard.

I mean, to do this, I have to die to myself. I have to give up my dreams. I have to give up the things that I want to serve people because I might not get what I want.

And the answer's found in verse 23. He says this, you were bought with a price. Don't become a slave of men.

What he's saying there is that you and I were bought with a price by Christ. Because he's bought us and because now we're his and because now we're out of slavery and because now our lives are being reordered with the gospel, and we're understanding where we're disordered, because all these things are true, because God's spirit is in us, you and I have the power and the strength to live the life that God wants us to live.

[37 : 17] When I went to Israel, and if you want to go with us, we're going to go next May, I think. We love it. It's a great time. I bought this coin. It's a silver coin.

It has Mark Anthony's picture on it. It's real. It's antiquities, the guy I was talking to. He told me it's one of the 30 silver coins that they paid Jesus to get, you know, betrayed.

So I paid a little extra for it, you know, because I thought that was really cool. No, but it's a real coin and it has Mark Anthony on it, silver, Daenerys. And the Bible says that when Jesus was betrayed or when you buy a slave, it costs 30 of these.

But the Scripture says that when God bought you and me, he paid for something much more precious than 30 pieces of silver.

He gave his son. He gave all of his son. Jesus didn't tie his blood. He paid it all for us. And Paul says, because God has done that for you and for me, we can trust him.

[38 : 39] We can trust him. He's going to take care of us. He knows where you're at. He knows your struggles.

He knows your needs. He wants you to trust him with your life. Be content knowing that the God of the universe desires to have an intimate relationship with you.

And there's nothing, nothing he withheld to make that happen. Can I ask you three questions?

We're done. First question is this. If all the singles in the church, this is for the singles, if all the singles in the church were like you and they all copied how you used your free time, how you used your energy, how you used your money, how you used your words, what you focused on in your free time, what you used your capacity for, if all the singles in the church did and copied exactly what you did, would the church be a healthy place?

If you were the role model, would the church be healthy? Would the church be healthy? I would have to answer no when I was a single.

[40 : 18] And he comes back and he asks the marriages, let me ask the marriages because I think we all have to think about this in our selfishness and our pride to the married brothers and sisters. If all the married people in Watermark treated their spouse like you do, they all focused the same amount of energy, same amount of time, same amount of money, same amount of just intentionality, meeting their needs.

If every married person in Watermark copied you, so their marriage was just like your marriage, would we have a healthy church?

Or would we be disordered? Would we be in trouble?

Paul says that the greatest testimony to a world that's perishing and walking in darkness is you and I. He's not calling us to be perfect, guys, and I'm far from that.

He's calling us to trust Him, to walk with Him, to know that He's good, that He paid everything for you, and that He wants to have an intimate relationship with you and He wants to change you and make something amazing into your life.

[41 : 52] I don't know how you answered that single question or the married question, but maybe you could just do this one other question. Is there something you could do this week? that could change it?

As a married person, is there some way that you can go towards your spouse and care for them and show them your appreciation and how much you love them and are for them and you're on the same team? What would that look like this week? Some of us, we need to do it every day.

I'm sure I do. As a single person, what is it that you could do this week? What could you change that could affect people's lives?

And that's Christ. You have the freedom and you can do this because Christ has already done it for you. The answer to the warrior at the beginning, what must I do to make God happy?

The answer is you can't because you're broken and you're disordered. The only thing that can make God happy is his son. You have his son if you're his child.

[43 : 10] Be content. Rest in peace. Know that God is with you. Father, we thank you for this day. We thank you for your word that is living and active.

We thank you for this church at Corinth. It's a mess and I'm sure that people will look at us years from now and say they're a mess.

But in the midst of all of this, Lord, we walk in your mercy and we walk in your grace and we know that you're changing us. Father, I just confess the disorderedness in my life even now as I have your word and your word changes me.

I still make choices not to follow and not to obey. Repent of that for our church and for myself. I pray for the singles in this church, Lord.

There are many and they have incredible capacity and power. I pray that they would take their eyes off of their self and they would put their eyes on you and they would rest knowing that you've done this great work in their life and that you've equipped them to do something amazing.

[44 : 16] Help us help them to do something amazing. Father, I pray for the marrieds in this group. I know that some marrieds are newly married and some have been around for a long time, but I think that we could always ask the question, am I being a good spouse?

how can I be better? I pray, Lord, that people would look at our marriages and realize that it's not us, it's you changing us and molding us.

Father, I pray for us as a church that we wouldn't just sit here in our own little church and just think about ourselves and look at our belly buttons and not worry about the world around us, but help us to realize that you've put us here to love people, to reach out to a world that does not yet know you and to point them to the creator, the creator of singleness, the creator of marriage, the creator of love, the creator of sex, and that they would realize that only in you are all those things going to be met in a way that is not disordered.

Father, we love you and we need you. We pray all these things in your son Jesus' name. Amen.