

SINGLES: WE SEE YOU

Today we're considering our single brothers and sisters in the Lord. We talk about marriage so much, but we want to address this, because our brethren deserve our attention, and truthfully, they have it, but we don't always say it.

Paul

- *"But we have this treasure in jars of clay, to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us. We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our bodies. For we who live are always being given over to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh. So death is at work in us, but life in you."* **2 Corinthians 4:7-12**
 - Wow. Can you imagine what Paul went through. Who here doesn't love Paul? How many of us have, at one point or another, felt ashamed when comparing our lives to Paul? We shouldn't do that - you know we don't all produce the same, do we? Jesus said some produce 30, 60 and 100 fold. Having said that, we're all looking forward to seeing him one day because of the encouragement we have received through his writings and clear dedication to the Lord. He was dedicated, wasn't he? Yet, there are times, in your own way, you've suffered for Christ. You've been tried by the "god of this world." But for most of us, we've had someone in the flesh by our side. You've had a spouse. Let's level with one another - it can be an advantage.
- *"This is my defense to those who would examine me. Do we not have the right to eat and drink? Do we not have the right to take along a believing wife, as do the other apostles and the brothers of the Lord and Cephas? Or is it only Barnabas and I who have no right to refrain from working for a living?"* **1 Corinthians 9:3-6**
 - However, Paul went through his trials and tribulations without a wife, didn't he? Perhaps Barnabas, the great encourager we recently studied about, shared in Paul's "single-hood" as well?
 - But, did Paul want you to feel sorry for him?
- *"Now as a concession, not a command, I say this. I wish that all were as I myself am. But each has his own gift from God, one of one kind and one of another."* **1 Corinthians 7:6**
 - The context is in the midst marriage. Listen, "single-hood" wasn't a curse to Paul, but rather a gift from God (please brothers, I don't want to hear an 'amen' at this time). Paul didn't need your pity! We need to be mindful and careful with our words when speaking to one another!
- *"I want you to be free from anxieties. The unmarried man is anxious about the things of the Lord, how to please the Lord. But the married man is anxious about worldly things, how to please his wife, and his interests are divided. And the unmarried or betrothed woman is anxious about the things of the Lord, how to be holy in body and spirit. But the married woman is anxious about worldly things, how to please her husband. I say this for your own benefit, not to lay any restraint upon you, but to promote good order and to secure your undivided devotion to the Lord."* **1 Corinthians 7:32-35**
 - It's right to point out the "present distress" which Paul mentions and shapes his views in this passage, but there are still truths present whether there is a present distress or not.

- The reality is that Paul had “freedoms” and time that the married do not. I don’t think it’s a coincidence that Peter seems to stay put in Jerusalem while Paul is traveling for the most part. It’s also true that when you have spouses and children, you have to divide your time and attention. It’s not wrong. It’s a reality.
- Consider Jesus’ counsel when speaking of marriage . . .
- *“The disciples said to Him, ‘If such is the case of a man with his wife, it is better not to marry.’ But He said to them, ‘Not everyone can receive this saying, but only those to whom it is given. For there are eunuchs who have been so from birth, and there are eunuchs who have been made eunuchs by men, and there are eunuchs who have made themselves eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of heaven. Let the one who is able to receive this receive it.’”* **Matthew 19:10-12**
 - Jesus wasn’t trying to discourage marriage, but rather elevating the importance of the Kingdom over marriage. God has blessed us with marriage and that is the general will and desire, but not all do.
 - Some, by birth, are not able to reproduce (perhaps there are other implications in this passage as well). Castration is in mind (at least in Jesus’ second reference to being made eunuchs by men). Yes, men in times past would be castrated in order to serve in the Royal Court. Finally, there are those who choose that life (that’s the idea) of a eunuch for the sake of the Kingdom of Heaven. They choose not to marry in order to be fully devoted to the Kingdom - Christ’s kingdom. This is Paul. He chose this life, and because of that choice, he has enriched ours.

Anna

- *“She who is truly a widow, left all alone, has set her hope on God and continues in supplications and prayers night and day . . .”* **1 Timothy 5:5**
 - Reading this passage brings one believer of old to mind . . .
- **Luke 2:22-38**
 - First of all, you’re encouraged by Simeon. I can’t pass that up. I don’t know if he was single or not, but to him, he could die with peace because he was looking at the Lord’s salvation in his arms. When you’re holding Jesus, there’s no room for anyone else is there? There’s no thought of anyone else. All else and everyone else is secondary. Your spouse. Your children. Your grandchildren. Your friends. They’re all wonderful and blessings from God. But they aren’t Jesus.
 - Anna. It doesn’t have to be a woman, but those who share her spirit and love. Those who do not depart from the temple, if you will. Those who serve as examples of those who live in worship to God. Those who rely on Him in prayer. Those who you can see appreciate who God is and what He’s done. Those who speak of Him to those who are waiting for the Lord or seeking Him. I’ve known some Anna’s. I know some now. Those who remind us that no matter what happens in life or how long you’re here - there’s always something to be thankful for. That something is our someone - God. Listen, it doesn’t matter if you’re young or old. You’re needed and many times lead the way for those around you.

Dorcas

- *“Now there was in Joppa a disciple named Tabitha, which, translated, means Dorcas. She was full of good works and acts of charity. In those days she became ill and died, and when they had washed her, they laid her in an upper room. Since Lydda was near Joppa, the disciples, hearing*

that Peter was there, sent two men to him, urging him, 'Please come to us without delay.' So Peter rose and went with them. And when he arrived, they took him to the upper room. All the widows stood beside him weeping and showing tunics and other garments that Dorcas had made while she was with them." **Acts 9:36-39**

- Don't say that what you do means little. You do things, even if they are little, that mean everything. I've shed tears over this passage as many times as I have any other passage. True story. I can see the widows crying in front of Peter. Here's Peter, a pillar of the church and apostle of God, but all they can think about is their sweet Dorcas. "Look at this tunic she made me. I was going through a difficult time and she made this for me. Every time I wore it, I could feel the love of Tabitha." "Yes, me too. I'd mentioned how pretty a sister's garment was one day to her, and the next thing I knew, she delivered my own beautiful garment. It wasn't near as beautiful as her. Please . . . bring her back!" I don't know what was said, but I get the idea. I can see it. I can feel it. It breaks your heart. **Such people fill our lives with good, because the hole is evident when they're gone.**
- There are those here that touch our hearts. Little things or big things you do. It means so much more to us than you know. We talk about them in our homes with our spouses and children while you continue to serve God and He alone.
- Alone. But we never really are, are we?

Jesus

- "Behold, the hour is coming, indeed it has come, when you will be scattered, each to his own home, and will leave Me alone. Yet I am not alone, for the Father is with Me. I have said these things to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world." **John 16:32-33**
 - Jesus wasn't married. It wasn't the point of His coming (though I guess He came for a bride - haha). He did entrust Himself to man because He knew what was in mankind. Yet, He is THE example to the whole world.
- "The sons of this age marry and are given in marriage, but those who are considered worthy to attain to that age and to the resurrection from the dead neither marry nor are given in marriage, for they cannot die anymore, because they are equal to angels and are sons of God, being sons of the resurrection." **Luke 20:34-36**
 - **Remember this: we all end up single.** Marriage is tied to this age, so it's only for a time.
 - This reminds us all, whether married or not, to get our priorities straight.
- "You yourselves bear me witness, that I said, 'I am not the Christ, but I have been sent before Him.' The one who has the bride is the bridegroom. The friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices greatly at the bridegroom's voice. Therefore this joy of mine is now complete. He must increase, but I must decrease." **John 3:28-30**
 - I don't know if John the Baptist was single (scriptures leave that impression), but we love a man who is content with forever being the friend of the bridegroom, but never the bridegroom (I read that and it really hit home). We are deeply moved by the one who lives the mantra, "He must increase, but I must decrease."
 - We know you're not Jesus and you don't want all eyes on you. But, we see you. Even more importantly, we see Him in you. You are one with Him. He is your bridegroom and you the bride. Let's give praise to Jesus for His love which changes us and gives us peace that passes all understanding.