

PRACTICAL QUESTIONS AROUND DIVORCE, HOMOSEXUAL MARRIAGE, SINGLENES, AND REMARRIAGE

It should be noted that this short article is to accompany a larger sermon on the topic of marriage preached from 1 Corinthians 7. Feel free to use this document for personal use after you have watched the sermon this is based on. However, permission is not granted to reuse this document for other purposes.

THE SERMON TO WATCH FIRST:

https://www.revo.church/th_sermon/being-married-divorced-or-single/

Also, these questions and answers are BEST DISCERNED IN THE COUNSEL OF WISE, LOVING, GODLY COMMUNITY. Written answers can seem burdensome and rule-filled. So, I encourage anyone who might read this to do so in the context of a conversation with the elders at our Church, your growth group, or Pastoral counseling.

1 Corinthians 7:8-16, NIV

8 Now to the unmarried and the widows I say: It is good for them to stay unmarried, as I do. 9 But if they cannot control themselves, they should marry, for it is better to marry than to burn with passion.

10 To the married I give this command (not I, but the Lord): A wife must not separate from her husband.

11 But if she does, she must remain unmarried or else be reconciled to her husband. And a husband must not divorce his wife.

12 To the rest I say this (I, not the Lord): If any brother has a wife who is not a believer and she is willing to live with him, he must not divorce her. 13 And if a woman has a husband who is not a believer and he is willing to live with her, she must not divorce him. 14 For the unbelieving husband has been sanctified through his wife, and the unbelieving wife has been sanctified through her believing husband. Otherwise your children would be unclean, but as it is, they are holy.

15 But if the unbeliever leaves, let it be so. The brother or the sister is not bound in such circumstances; God has called us to live in peace. 16 How do you know, wife, whether you will save your husband? Or, how do you know, husband, whether you will save your wife?

Practical Application in Marriage.

As you can see above, and probably recall from the sermon wives **MUST NOT** separate from their husbands, nor should husbands separate from their wives. **“Separate”** comes from the Greek meaning **to place room between**. Essentially, it means to divorce or abandon your spouse.

There were quite a few clear practical applications that we brought out from this sermon.

For instance, *don't get divorced*. That much is absolutely clear here.

But, are there exceptions to that general rule?

EXCEPTIONS TO STAYING MARRIED

As the sermon noted, there is a clear exception: **if the unbeliever leaves the believer** in the marriage then you are not bound.

PRACTICAL APPLICATION:

If I'm a Christian but the non-Christian spouse leaves me, I should let them go and pursue God in my singleness.

Remarriage shouldn't be automatic.

Would it be better if the marriage could work?

YES. But, if the non-believer leaves the believer isn't supposed to **force the marriage** on them.

It's important to remember this is a command from God's word: You are NOT BOUND... literally, from the Greek, “You are not under bondage” in that circumstance. Meaning, you would be free to get married again. **That's the only clear exception in Scripture for divorce (and remarriage).**

But, what if you already got remarried after a divorce? Now, you realize you should've stayed single, what should you do *at this moment since you ARE married again?*

PRACTICAL APPLICATION:

If I am divorced and remarried in a one-man & one-woman marriage I should stay in the position I'm at **right now**. Even if it was the result of disobedience.

Apply the marriage principles from the sermon to keep your **current** marriage healthy and do not seek a divorce.

1 Corinthians 7:17

Each person should live as a believer in whatever situation the Lord has assigned to them, just as God has called them.

We didn't make it to this verse in the sermon, but it's right after the section we studied.

I apply it to those who got remarried. Whatever position you find yourself in now, try not to alter it. If you're single – don't *try* to get married. If you're divorced, don't *try* to find a new spouse. If you've already been remarried *don't try to change it*.

Stay where you're at and follow the Lord's commands on honoring your marriage from your current position.

But, what about other types of marriage? Like polygamous, homosexual, or other marriages? What about divorce there?

PRACTICAL APPLICATION:

If I'm a Christian married but in a different type of marriage that isn't defined by God as marriage (such as group, polygamous, or homosexual, I should get out of that marriage and consider singleness.

One thing I have to point out that we should notice in the Biblical discussion of marriage is essential: *God's definition of marriage.*

In the sermon you've heard JESUS talk about it.

The Apostle Paul talked about it.

The Apostle Matthew wrote about it.

Last week we quoted Genesis regarding it.

In every situation, the definition of Biblical marriage is always with one man and one woman.

I am not speaking to the legality or politics of such marriages. This is only about what God defines as marriage. Since marriage is meant to be one-man and one-woman, other marriages should be repented from and ended.

But, I would add this: *I believe you may have a **moral obligation** to help care for someone that once joined you in marriage, at least for a time.*

In other continents there were numerous polygamous marriages. Christian missionaries would go over and people would start following Jesus, but what to do with those marriages?

If you are in a polygamous marriage you should divorce all but your first wife. **However, because often those wives and children are dependent upon you, you should be financially responsible for them even afterwards.**

This may be the same in a homosexual marriage. If one spouse promised to work and care for the other spouse financially, that first spouse may be obligated to assist the other person for a time.

In any of these situations, because you promised to take care of them, even though you now realize the marriage is not Biblical, but because they submitted to you and put themselves in a dangerous position of **relying on you**, you can't just abandon any responsibility you took on.

Now, if they got remarried or are able to take care of themselves, then that would be different.

But, if you've been in an unbiblical marriage, you might still have responsibilities to care for even after getting out of the marriage.

This is also true for *children* from these marriages. A divorce in this circumstance does not relieve you of any moral responsibility or promises you made to those children. You certainly would have financial, and perhaps other concerns, for children who depended upon you.

What if you're the one who may be in need?

Perhaps you are in a marriage that should be divorced, yet you aren't "the provider". Perhaps, for example, you are in a polygamous marriage and you're the third wife who has stayed home with the children and has no great job prospects.

What do you do if your current marriage partner isn't willing to do things God's way? You should still exit the marriage, but keep in mind a few things:

One-time Jesus was talking about how difficult things will be for true believers. Then, he gives a reminder saying, "Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground outside your Father's care. And even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. So don't be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows" (Matthew 10:29-31).

God sees your situation and *he genuinely cares for his believers*. There will be difficulties for us, but he hasn't forgotten about you. And, as you make the right decision you will find that "you are worth more than many sparrows" to God. He will **never** abandon you.

Proverbs 3:5 reminds us, "Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight."

Additionally, in Matthew 6, Jesus is talking about we all need food, and clothing, and those sorts of things. But promises that if you "seek first his kingdom and his righteousness... all these things will be given to you as well. Therefore do not worry about tomorrow."

Do what is **right** and watch how God shows up.

But, also, don't forget about your Church family! There may be ways that the Church can help provide temporary shelter or support for you in ways that you don't even know about!

In other words, this decision has to be yours, but you are not in it alone.

WHAT ABOUT SINGLENES?

PRACTICAL APPLICATION:

If I'm not pursuing marriage, I shouldn't be dating. But I should have some principles and Holy standards for a spouse, in case I start to like someone.

We covered this in the sermon, but to be clear, if you aren't pursuing marriage, there's no Godly reason to be dating. God gives three legitimate categories of people in the Bible:

1. Single.
2. Pursuing Marriage.
3. Married.

"Dating for fun" isn't one of those slots. You should be **finding your purpose** or **living out your purpose** if you're single. THAT IS TO BE *SERVING GOD WITH ALL YOU ARE!!!*

The dating mentality messes up marriage **and** singleness:

Tony Evans in his book, Kingdom Single says, "Far too many couples are married and yet still feel alone because they never fully knew what it meant to be fully single."

You have to know **who you are in Christ** if you want to be strong. TWO PEOPLE WHO DON'T KNOW HOW TO BE SINGLE HUMANS ARE GOING TO HAVE A REAL HARD TIME HAVING A HEALTHY MARRIAGE.

Simply put, you don't need to be dating if you aren't going to get married.

PURPOSE

So, then, how do you find purpose and wholeness in singleness? You don't want to merely be "in waiting" as though you are incomplete. Because *you are not an incomplete person* as a single adult. You are a whole, complete person, created in the image of God.

As Tony Evans said, "The key to your completeness as a single is rooted first and foremost in your calling, not your sexuality."

You may definitely have sexual desires. But, that is not your purpose. You were put here to honor and praise Jesus above all other things. You have a role to play in the Kingdom of God. Most likely, multiple roles.

1 Corinthians 7:33-34 says, “A married man is concerned about the affairs of this world—how he can please his wife— and his interests are divided. An unmarried woman or virgin is concerned about the Lord’s affairs.”

You will have more mental, emotional, and likely time, capacity to serve the Lord without distraction. If you decide to work on a project for the Church’s kid’s ministry until 1:00am, *you can do it if you so choose.*

If you meet someone who doesn’t know the Lord *you can take them out to dinner and spend an hour and a half learning their story and sharing the gospel with them!* This isn’t to mean that single people aren’t busy. Not at all. But, that in your singleness you have **options** where others have **obligations**.

The married man or woman may hear from their spouse, “Of course you can’t take so-and-so out to dinner, we have such-and-such plans tonight!” or “Why didn’t you check with me first?” in a way that is far more intense than outside of a marriage.

Additionally, you have opportunity to see God working in your singleness. Psalms 139:13-14 says this:

*For you created my inmost being;
you knit me together in my mother’s womb.
I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made;
your works are wonderful,
I know that full well.*

God created you – and saw all your days – every day to come before you were born. Your singleness is not a surprise to him. And he still calls you to be able to shout out Psalm 139:13-14 with all passion! “Your works are wonderful, I know that full well.” Insert that about yourself.

“I, and I as a single person, am one of your wonderful works! I know that **full well.**” You shouldn’t know it partly. As though God created you, but things won’t really get started until you have a family.

No. God created you – you are a wonderful work as you are now. And you should be able to embrace and worship God for the *place you are in, right now.*

You are learning lessons someone *not* in your situation couldn’t learn.

You are become holy in ways that you couldn’t become holy if you were married.

You are designed by God to worship him fully, serve him fully, be happy in him completely, *right now as a single person.*

FRIENDSHIPS

As a single person, you may need to wrap your mind around relationships differently. In our culture, there is *an incredible amount* of pressure to be in romantic relationships. So much so, that a single person who isn't dating feels like they are *wrong*.

When was the last time you saw a TV show or movie where someone was single, and simply content in their singleness, and it wasn't even a big deal?

We need to learn to reframe what deep relationships are.

Deep relationships are *not necessarily*:

- *romantic*
- *sexual*
- *committed (like in marriage or engagement)*
- *going to "the next level"*

Deep relationships **can be**:

- *engaging but not romantic*
- *platonic and non-sexual*
- *committed (like in a brotherhood or family type of way)*
- *content*

Scripture talks about friendships fairly often. Jesus himself was a single man who had twelve close friends and was completely content in those relationships. And, they were deep and meaningful.

Seriously though, let's talk about the miracle of Jesus having twelve close friends in his thirties. How did he achieve this?

- He found some people (some married, some single) who also desired close relationships
- He found people who wanted God in a huge way
- Their mission in life was their common foundation

You may need to take the first step in creating some close friendships. Many others would certainly desire this, but feel too awkward to hug a friend or rely on them when in need.

Proverbs 18:24 says, "One who has unreliable friends soon comes to ruin, but there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother." Who can be closer than your brother? *A friend*.

Scripture *affirms* friendship as something **deep and meaningful**.

When Job suffered, his friends came and sat with him for days.

A single lady I know was able to sit with a friend of hers who went through a recent tragedy. Because of her singleness, and because she loves with the love of Christ, she was able to commit more heart and time to that friendship than anyone else could have.

This doesn't mean you simply latch onto anyone. Proverbs 12:26 says "The righteous choose their friends carefully." So, proceed with caution and patience.

It will **take time** to find and cultivate deep friendships. But, you can do so!

Single People Being Prepared For Marriage, Even if You Don't Plan on Marriage

However, even if you're not planning on getting married it's quite good for you to have some principals about who you would marry **because it's hard to control our feelings**. You might find yourself **dreaming of marriage** after meeting someone, though you never anticipated it.

So, make your mind do some work ahead of time.

What are HOLY STANDARDS you should look for in someone?

Someone you marry should *currently* be able to:

- Pray with you daily
- Teach children what the Bible says and what it means
- Love being at Church. ... I mean... getting to Church shouldn't be a question because they're the kind of person who wants to help others get to Church and know Jesus

THOSE ARE JUST THREE OF THE MOST BASIC QUALITIES. If you **like** someone but they don't even have those qualities *don't date them*. You should probably dump them if you are dating them because THEY AREN'T CHRISTIAN MARRIAGE MATERIAL.

Before I married my wife, Meadow, we were friends for a year. Then we dated for a year. Then we were engaged for about nine months.

But, before we even dated – while we were still friends – I knew I might marry this girl! So, I started a journal about our relationship. In the journal I noted that I planned to give it to her some day because I thought we could get married, but that I didn't know for sure if we would.

I'm going to let you read part of that journal, but first note: **I knew I could marry her before I even dated her**. That's why dating her *made sense*. She was marriage material.

Here's a paragraph that I wrote the night I asked her to date me:

Jeff's Journal

Finally everybody left [the campfire] – and it was just you and me. I had my guitar and we sang some praise and worship songs. Then I told you I had written a new song. I sang it to you – it was about you. After that I told you how much you meant to me and that I didn't want to be without you. Then I asked

your permission to date you exclusively. You said yes. Tonight is a great night. You are a great girl. We prayed together tonight – I have never prayed with a girl like that before. I loved it. We also decided to pray together every night. I am looking forward to that as we desire to make God and Jesus Christ our goal and center of our relationship. God, thank you for Meadow and the girl that you have made her and are making her. Thank you for giving her to me as a great friend.

What made **me** and **her** both marriage material for each other? Notice a few things:

- We sang praise and worship songs together. We were both completely united in our desire to love Jesus and we were not ashamed of it.
- We prayed together and planned to be praying *even more*. We didn't hide our faith at all, in fact we had no problems with praying out loud together. If you cannot pray out loud with someone, or they cannot with you, it is probable that they or you aren't Spiritually ready to be in a relationship, yet.
- I mentioned clearly that God and Jesus would be the center of our relationship. JESUS AT THE CENTER. Not each other. Not sexual attraction. Not emotional power. Our desire to serve and love Jesus was the thing we had *most in common*.
- We were friends before we dated. Some circumstance might exist where you date someone to see if they are marriage material. But, becoming friends first allowed us to get to know each other in many situations before we dated. Dating can often be "a show" to demonstrate your best qualities for a short period of time. But, getting to know someone as a friend first gives a better perspective on who they really are (without physical affection clouding judgment).

I hope these instructions and answered questions help you pursue a Godly relationship. If you have more questions please bring them to your growth group and if they cannot answer it I'm certain your growth group leader would be happy to bring them to me.

- Pastor Jeff

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