Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

Reasons for Remaining Single, Part 2
Scripture: 1 Corinthians 7:32-40
Code: 1832

Take you Bible, if you will now, and let's look together at the seventh chapter of 1 Corinthians. I have had a lot of reaction to last Sunday morning's message. Some of it good. Some of it strange and different. And it's been kind of interesting, this is not an easy section and if you were here for the first time ever last Sunday, you have a rather imbalanced vi 1w. I've even had several discussions with my own wife whois wondering about my view of marriage. And a ... and my sister who gave me a terrible bad time about it.

But you have to realize that what I'm trying to do is to explain to you what 1 Corinthians 7 is saying. This is not all the teaching in the Bible on marriage. This is a balancing factor. And we've been discussing, last week and today, reasons for remaining single. It somehow has confused some people. So I hope this morning that you will understand that we are not advocating singleness for everybody. We're not saying marriage is wrong and that you shouldn't give attention to marriage. Some wives said t o m e, "Boy, m I glad my husband wasn't there last week, it would ruin our life," you know. But I hope that isn't true, I think they're being a little bit facetious at that point. But we're trying to show you what Paul is saying her in terms of reasons for remaining single.

Now let e see if I can build back into it and we'll look together at this as we continue in our study of 1 Corinthians chapter 7. The relationship that God has designed for most people is marriage. There's no question about that. The relationship that God has designed for most people is marriage. And marriage is good. Marriage is a good thing. in 1 Corinthians 7:2, right there, "Let every man have his own wife, let every woman have her own husband." This is acceptable. This is God's standard.

In Proverbs 18:22, "Whoso findeth a wife findeth a good thing." And it goes on to say that God looks on it with favor; marriage is a good thing.

In Jeremiah 29:6, there is a command sent out to go and take wives and beget children and tell your children to take wives and beget more children. God has established as the majority standard of life relationships, that people be married.

In 1 Timothy 4 he even says heretics will come along in the last days who deny the Lord and they will forbid marriage. But that's considered a heresy. Marriage is acceptable to God. Hebrews 13:4, "Marriage is honorable and the bed is undefiled." So, God looks very favorably on marriage.

But, for every one--marriage is not the normal. God has given some people the special gift of being single. They do not need to be married to fulfill God's will. In fact, in fulfilling God's will to the very fullest they are better if they stay single. And the reason I think this is such an important study is that the church tends to categorize single people as abnormal, and it isn't so because God has so designed it for some. Verse 7 of this chapter, "I would that all men were as I," he says, I wish everybody was single, "But every man has his proper gift, one after this manner," that is after singleness like me, "and another after that, "that is like marriage, Some are gifted for marriage and some are gifted for singleness.

Singleness is a special gift of God. Single people do not need to be looked on as if they're different, strange. abnormal, unfulfilled, unqualified f o r a certain service. Not at all. In fact, you know something, people? Single people aren't really single because they have the Holy Spirit t dwelling in them. And if you want to think about it that way, maybe they are the most complete of all because they don't need another human being to complete them. They're uniquely designed by God for function within the body of Christ.

Now in 1 Corinthians 7, Paul is dealing with issues in Corinth regarding being married or being single. The Jewish people in Corinth are saying you have to be married. Some of the Greek philosophers are saying you can be more devoted to God; you can be more spiritual by being single. Paul says that isn't even an issue, that doesn't even matter. Verse 20, he says: "Let everybody stay the way he was when he was called." Verse 24, "Let every man in whatever state he is called abide with God." Verse 27, "If you're bound to a wife, don't seek to be loosed. If you're loosed from a wife, don't seek a wife." In other words, stay married or stay single.

Either one is fine, they have no relationship to spirituality. God has given some the gift of singleness, others He desires to be married. That's just different it isn't good or bad. But that's God's design.

Now he has clearly said that for some singleness is right. But not for everybody, For some, singleness is right. He doesn't want to come down and say marriage is wonderful, marriage is everything, everybody ought to got married because that would be to ignore the f act that God wants some people single. So after having said marriage is wonderful. Fulfill your marriage. You don't have to leave your wife to be a good Christian. You don't have to do that. After saying all of that, he says, "On the other hand, on the contrary, you can be single and be totally fulfilled if you have the gift."

Now I think Paul knows that people who are single and have the gift are going to be under pressure. Because society accepts as the standard marriage and so single people tend to get pressured into getting married. There tends to be that push. And I think it comes beginningly from mom and dad who want to push their kids into marriage. And then it comes from peer pressure, everybody finds somebody. And you're sort of left out. And this pressure begins to build. You get into the church and

everything is family and you have all kinds of family activities and family orientation. And single people sort of stick out and people look on them as if they belong to a sort of different dimension. And the pressure continues. And I think that what Paul is saying here is very, very important for the church to recognize that God has gifted people for being single and it is no less significant than being married. It's different. It's His plan.

Now in order to encourage people with the gift, and that's the basic premise you have to hang on to, that singleness is a gift and if you don't have the gift, get married because it won't do you any good to try to stay single and serve the Lord if all you are thinking about is marriage. It's better to marry than to burn, he says over there in verse 9. So, it's for people who have the gift. If you have the gift of singleness, Paul says, exercise it.

Now, from verse 25 to 40, he gives five reasons they ought to exercise it. Five reasons to stay single if you have the gift. Now remember, people, it's only if you have the gift. I don't have the gift and most of you don't have the gift, but if you do have the gift, here are the five reasons to encourage you to stay single.

Reason number one, and we're reviewing the first three, the pressure of the system...the pressure of the system. And he says there in verse 26, 'It's good for the present distress." It's good to be single because of the present violence. There was a persecution coming right around the corner, Paul could see it, it was only a matter of time until it would be there and he realized that married people were going to suffer much more under persecution. Why? Because wives would suffer the death of their husband. Husbands would suffer the death of their wife. Children would suffer the death of their parents. And that family ties wouldmake the pain and the nguish and the anxiety and the pressure all the greater in a persecuting situation. The bitter conflict and the terrible alternative of duty to God a d affection to the family would tear people apart. So in a difficult society, in a persecuting environment, it is better to be single, he says, if y u have the gift because you don't have that tremendous pressure that the world of persecution lays on you.

Second point, and we covered these in detail last time, I'm only reminding you the problems of the flesh. A second reason if you have the gift to remain single is the problems of the flesh. Verse 28, the middle of the verse, "Nevertheless, such shall have trouble in the flesh and I would spare you." Married people, that's fine, it's all right, you don't sin if you get married, he says in 28, but you will have trouble. And the word "flesh" means our humanness. There will be human trouble. There will be human Conflict. There will be just the plain ole problems of our humanness. And marriage frequently, usually intensifies human weakness. And if you're married, you just have trouble. You have to deal with issues in your home, with your wife, with your husband, with your children. It just adds a friction to living. Marriage isn't all that friction, it isn't all bad. It's wonderful and it's blissful when it's the way God designed it. But there will be times of difficulty.

The third reason he says to stay single if you have the gift is the passing of the world. After all, marriage is only a part of this fashion of this schema, of this world and it's all passing away anyway. He says, "It remains that they that have wives should be as though they had none, they that weep as though they weep not, and to rejoice as though they rejoice not; and they that buy as though they possess not; and they that have pleasure in the world, not abusing it, for the schema of the world is in the process of passing away."

In other words, those things are all part of the world. The world's pleasures, the world's commodities, the world's emotions and the world's relationships. And if you can be free of those things then you're just that much less attached. And we went into that last time as well. Set your affections on things above. If you're single, just think, you don't have to get totally attached to the world, totally attached to the emotions that come in close relationships in marriage, to the necessities of buying things and indulging in worldly activity.

Now I'm not saying that it's wrong to have pleasure and it's wrong to buy things or it's wrong to be emotional or it's wrong to be married, no it's just that that demands a certain kind of attachment. And it is an attachment to a passing world. There's no marriage in heaven. That's just a passing thing.

And so he simply says if you have the gift of singleness, it just means you don' need to get so engulfed in the world as a married person does. And it doesn't mean badly engulfed, it doesn't mean in the world's evil, it just means you have to, for example, buy life insurance and spend your money on that so if you die, somebody's going to be able to take care of your children. You have to save your money for their education. You have to have this medical insurance or money laid away for all the family's physical needs. You have to buy a bigger house, a bigger car, more of this and more of that because you have to support the larger group of people you have around you. You have to be sensitive to psychological needs, emotional needs, spiritual needs. There is a concentration there. There is an involvement there that marriage demands. That's all he's saying. If you have the gift of singleness and don't need to get into that then you're better to stay single.

All right then, if you have the gift of singleness, be says remain single because of the pressures of the world, the problems of the flesh, and the passing of the world. Let me give you a fourth and we'll start with verse 32 where we left off.

This fourth point supporting staying single is the preoccupation of the married. If persons stay single, he doesn't get engulfed in the preoccupation of the married. You say, "Well, what is the preoccupation of the married? What are they preoccupied with?" The answer is each other. Look at verse 32, "But I would have you without care." Now what he means there is free from anxiety. "I would have you free from anxiety, he that is unmarried cares for the things that belong to the Lord how he may please the Lord. But he that is married cares for the things that are of the world, how he

may please...what? ... his wife and is divided." In your Bible at the end of verse 33, if it isn't there write "and is divided." That's in the best manuscripts. The proper manuscripts say "How he may please his wife and is divided."

Now what is he saying here? Well, he says I'd like you to be free from anxiety. I'd like you to be--in a sense--carefree. Lightfoot said, "A man who is a hero in himself becomes a coward when he thinks of his widowed wife and his orphaned children."

There are certain cares that just encumber your mind when you're married. A married man must concentrate on things concerning hiswife. A single unmarried, verse 32 says, cares for the things that belong to the Lord how he may please the Lord. Now this is potential, people. It doesn't mean that every single person is totally devoted to Jesus. It's just that he has the potential for that total devotion. There is an undistractedness that comes in the life of an unmarried person. He has only really one set of cares and that is his relation to the Lord. The married person has a divided set of cares, the Lord and his family. It isn't that they are bad, they're both good. They're both wonderful. They're both designed by God. But they are two things. There is the inability for single-mindedness in marriage. A married man is a divided person.

I think bout Luke 14, verse 20, where Jesus was calling people to follow Him. And He says to this one guy, "Come and follow Me." And the guy says, "I have married a wife and therefore I cannot come." wonder how many times that has happened around the world in the history of the church that there have been ministries and opportunities open but somebody married a wife and couldn't go. You say, "Well, was it wrong for them to marry?" No, it wasn't wrong but maybe it would have been better if they had the gift of singleness to have stayed single and then they wouldn't have had that problem.

I'll give you an interesting footnote. This is the only spiritual gift that I know of in the Scripture that you have an option to use. Isn't that interesting? It's the only one where there is an option. Where he says if you want to get married, that's fine, verse 28, you have not sinned. But I would sure suggest to you that if you have the gift of singleness, use it. God never makes a marriage a sin.

I got a letter from somebody last week that said their sin was in marriage. There is no such thing as sinning in getting married. That is not a sin to get married, unless you were to marry an unbeliever. But in marriage, that is a good thing. They sin not. It is the only spiritual gift that I know of that you have an option to use. And I'm sure there are some people who could have if they really were sensitive to the Lord stayed single and really been useful. But like Luke 14:20, they married a wife. That isn't wrong. It just may be that God could have used them in a different way. He'll use them through their marriage perhaps equally. But that option is there.

All right, if you're unmarried, potentially there is the possibility of caring only for the things that belong to the Lord, how to please Him. Just that total single minded devotion. But, verse 33, if you're married,

page 10 you care for the things that are of the world, how you may please your wife and are divided.

Now, this is precisely true of the woman. Verse 34, the first part can be eliminated. "There is difference also between a wife," that part is out and "And is divided" should be in. One of the reasons I say this, we have later manuscript evidence since the script of the King James that prove to us that the proper reading here is, as I said, "please his wife and is divided And then it picks up in verse 34 with the word "And," so it would be a capital "All, "And a virgin and the unmarried woman cares for the things of the Lord that she may be holy both in body and in spirit, but she that is married cares for the things of the world how she may please her husband." And again he's simply saying there is a dividedness here. It isn't wrong, it's just there.

A single person, male or female, has that total potential of concentration and devotion to the Lord in service to Him. A married person must care for his family because God says so. At the same time, must be involved in pursuing the things of the Lord.

Now you'll notice an interesting thing, it says at the end of verse 35 that this person is without distraction. A single person need have no distraction from serving the Lord. How many times, for example, in your life, some of you that are married to an unbeliever, have you had the struggle between trying to please an unbelieving partner and trying to serve the Lord? Or, maybe you've got a super, colossal outstanding; walking-in-the-Spirit partner and you still realize that sometimes your involvement as a family means that you can't do some things that maybe you otherwise could do. Now you can do some things that you otherwise couldn't do, so it goes both ways.

But that's all Paul is saying. A person who's married has a divided concentration. But, look at verse 34, the one that is single cares for the things of the Lord whether she's a virgin or unmarried, she cares for the things of the Lord and she is holy in body and in spirit ... potentially. What does it mean? The word "holy" basically in its very simple sense means "separated." And I think that's what he's saying. He's not saying single people are more holy than married people. Is that true? What does holiness have to do with it? It certainly doesn't have to do with your marital status; it has to do with the righteousness of God imputed to you, right? And there areplenty of single people who aren't very holy and there are plenty of married people who are and that isn't the criteria. But what he's saying is that the one who is not married can be separatedunto God physically and spiritually. There are no physical attachment, humanly speaking, there is no need to satisfy the physical. There are no spiritual encumbrances. There is a certain liberty and consecration. And that's what he's talking about.

Now remember, this is only for those who have the gift. If you don't have the gift, like 1 Timothy 5 says, "Let the younger women marry," let them marry, because if you don't, they're going to grow wanton later on and then you're going to have problems. Let them marry. But if you have the gift, remain that way, there is a possibility and a potential of consecration in body and spirit that is very unique. But a married woman cares for the things of the world, she has to worry about pleasing her

husband, which is good, she ought to do that. But it's just that there are two things.

Now let me add verse 35 because Paul did and it's important. "Now this I speak for your own profit." Now somebody's going to get confused if he doesn't say this, so he says I'm just telling you this, folks, for your profit. "I am not casting a brochosaround your neck," a noose. I'm not putting a legalistic noose on you; I just want you to know what is good, "That you may attend on the Lord without distraction." It isn't that you have to stay single. Even if you have the gift for it, it is not a command, it is not that you must do this or else, it is that you have the option, you have the liberty, you have the freedom. And I'm only telling you for your own good, if you have the gift you'd be better off to use it. And, again, I point out the fact that this is the only gift I know of that's optional.

So, he's saying potentially you can have an undistracted devotion to the Lord if you want to take advantage of it. And I'm not saying this to bind you in legalism. I'm not saying this like a command that puts a noose around your neck and hangs you. I'm just telling you this, I'm not trying to put a snare on you, I just want you to know that this would give you the potential of serving the Lord without any division.

Let me give you an illustration of it. Look back in your Bible at Luke 10. Some of you may be fussing around in your brain for an illustration, so here's on in Luke 10. This is a really great story here. Luke 10:38 says, "Now it came to pass as they went that He entered into a certain village and a certain woman named Martha received Him into her house." Now h re's Jesus and He's in the house of this lovely lady named Martha. "And he had a sister called Mary who also sat at Jesus' feet and heard His worn Jesus came into the house, sat down and Mary just plopped at His feet an just hung on every word, just drank it in. "But Martha," verse 40, "was cumbered about much serving."

Martha w s busy around the house getting everything ready. Is there anything wrong with preparing a meal? No, that's biblical hospitality. Is that good? That's good. Somebody comes and you feed them, that's wonderful. So she's busy doing that. "She's cumbered about much serving and she came o Jesus," and this is what she says to Christ, most interesting, Lord, dost Thou not care that my sister hath left me to serve alone?" Lord, does it matter to You that I'm setting the table by myself while she sit there? Does this bother You, Lord? "Lord, would You tell her to help me?"

Now, that will give you some idea of the authority that Martha felt she had over Mary. She had to ask Jesus to tell her. Would You please tell her to help me set this table? "Jesus answered and said unto her, Martha, Martha, thou art anxious and troubled about many things--in parenthesis (none of which matter)." Why do you say that, MacArthur? Verse 42, non thing ... what? ... is needful and Mary has chosen the good part which shall n t be taken away from her."I'm not telling her anything, she's doing w at she ought to do. Which would you rather have the Word of God or a cold dinner or a hot dinner? I'd rather have the Word of God and a cold dinner or no dinner than a hot dinner and not the Word of God. That's the implication. She's doing what's right.

You see, here's Mary and she has a single-mindedness, doesn't she? She could care les about the table and the place settings, she could care less about the whatever's going on in the kitchen, all she wants to do is drink in with devotion to Jesus Christ. But not Martha, she ... she's thinking about Christ is there and she's got all kinds of things going. Well, this is just simply, the illustration of the fact it isn't wrong to be hospitable but it does ca use, in this case, a divided devotion, doesn't it? Well, that's what Paul is saying. Thank God for people who have that single-mindedness.

You know, when I was in Keto Ecuador and had the wonderful privilege of meeting and since then corresponding with Rachel Saint, this unusual woman ho has given her whole life to those Alca Indians. She's an incredible person. I often think to myself that maybe unmarried people are the most fulfilled people of all because they don't need somebody else to make them complete. And she's a complete person in herself by the power of the Spirit and she's down there with those Indians and she's just going at it, revolutionizing a whole society for Christ. And throughout the history of the church, there have been many people with that kind of gift and that kind of commitment to Christ. And I thank God for them. There are reasons, you see**,** to receive the gift of singleness and welcome it. The pressure of the system, the problems of the flesh, the passing of the world and the preoccupation of the married. When you get married there is a dividedness in your life. It isn't bad it's just a fact.

Now fifthly, and this is the last reason he tells the single people they'd be better of f to stay single if they have the gift, the fifth one is the permanence of the union.

Boy, when you get married, you are married. And that is it. And there's no turning back. Verse 39, let's jump down to 39, we'll get back to the others. "Now the wife is bound by the law as long as her husband lives." Boy, t hat's a long time. Now, this is a lifetime arrangement.

Now, some people have questioned why this passage is in here, 39 and 40, and there's a whole lot of discussion about it. And I don't know that I can give you the absolute answer to why it's here, but I'll tell you what I believe. I don't believe it's isolated. Some say it's just a tack-on to answer an issue about widows. I don't think so. I think basically, though it does answer that issue, it is here as just another reason for remaining single. Why? Because of the permanence of marriage. You'd be better off if you have the gift to stay single because once you're married, that is it. And you'll never be able to exercise the potential again. So think a long time before you do. Marriage is permanent. Once you're stuck, you're stuck.

Now, I'm not saying that everybody who's married is stuck. But there are some people who are married and stuck and you know that. And it isn't that it's bad, it's just that it's permanent, Some marriages are bad. You know, you can get a woman who clings so much that you can't do anything. You know, I know some men who would serve the Lord if their wife ever let go of them long enough.

In Proverbs 21:9 it says, "It is better to dwell in a corner than with a brawling woman in a big house." Believe me, there ... you know, there are people who are looking for such corners. You know, it's better to be all alone in a corner than married to the wrong one, right?

Listen to verse 19, "It is better to live in the desert than with a contentious and angry woman." And that's why a lot of times you'll hear a man say, "I gottaget out ... I gotta go...I must be alone." It's better to be in the desert than with a contentious and angry woman.

What am I saying by that? I'm saying that very often marriage can become a bondage...a negative bondage. It is truly a positive bondage, a loving bondage a fulfilling and meaningful and happy bondage but it is permanent. And when Jesus was speaking in Matthew 19 to the disciples and He was telling them about how marriage was permanent and He said, "If anybody marries...if anybody sets his wife apart without adultery, he causes her to commit adultery.' Boy, and He was emphasizing this, that marriage is solid bond andit's unbroken for any other reason than adultery. What the disciples responded was was this, "Hey, we think it would be better if its so permanent to stay single." And He said, "Well, that's right but not all of you can handle it."

So, they came to the same conclusion that the permanence of marriage is a good reason to stay single if you have the gift. Because once you're married, the responsibilities, the encumbrances, that which you must give to your marriage is set and you must give it.

Now, I want to add to that, people, that I look at my marriage as a friendship and a companionship. And that over-balances all of the negative factors that would ever be there from a ministry standpoint because I can't live without my wife cause I love her and I love my children and I wouldn't have it any other way. But all we're pointing out here are the basic facts of the union, not our attitude toward it. We can see that marriage is a permanent thing and you're there to stay but that doesn't have to be bad. It could be good but it's still true, isn't it, it's permanent. And he's saying simply this, if you have the gift of singleness, think about it because if you ever choose to marry, that's a final choice. And you can't go back unless there is a death.

And then he says in 39, "If the husband does die, you're still at liberty to be married to whomever you want only ... what? ... in the Lord .... only in the Lord." Romans 7 says the same thing, the only thing that severs a marriage is death. Now Jesus, of course, said that ... that divorce and Paul added the unbelieving departs, but apart from sin, apart from that, in the marriage of Christians there is no way out, it's permanent. So once you've made the choice, he says, that's the choice. And when we marry people, they say until death do us part. And that's what God intended. After that you can be married but you can only marry a Christian.

And there's a basic principle there, folks, only in the Lord. I believe Christians are only permitted to marryChristians. Somebody said ... I read somewhere this week, somebody said, "Well, that is the best, but certainly God would allow in many cases for us to marry unbelievers to evangelize them." I don't believe that. I don't believe marriage is a good ground for evangelism. When you will marry an unbeliever, in effect you're saying to that unbeliever, "Christianity is important to me but not very important. Right? Because if it was really important you'd marry a Christian if Christian fellowship meant that much.

Listen to Deuteronomy 7, and this is God's standard from way back. "The Lord thy God shall bring thee into the land where you're going to possess it and He's cast out nations before you to make the land ready for you, the Hittites, the Girgashites, the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, the Jebusites (and I expect you to know how to spell all of those on the quiz) and when the Lord your God shall deliver them before you, you will smite them and destroy them and make no covenant with them." And you go in there, boy, you're going to get rid of all those pagan people.

Now listen, "Neither shalt thou make marriages with them, thy daughter thou shalt not give to his son, nor his daughter shalt thou take unto thy son, for they will turn away thy son from following Me that they may serve other gods."

Now sometimes in a mixed marriage somebody does get saved, but more often than not, somebody gets dragged away. From Deuteronomy 7, it hasn't changed. You can go to 2 Corinthians chapter 6 and Paul says the very same thing, "Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers, there is no fellowship between light and darkness." What concord has Christ and Satan? It doesn't ma e any sense.

So, marriage is permanent. The only way out is death. And then if death did occur, he adds to the widows here they may remarry, only in the Lord. But, verse 40, "She would be happier in my judgment if she just stayed single," if she had the gift in the first place. "And I am convinced also that I have the Spirit of God." What he's simply saying there is all these people were saying, the Jews were saying, "Well, boy, God says to get married." And somebody else's saying, "Well, the Spirit of God said to stay single." And Paul says, "Well, I'm telling you a few things and I have the Spirit of God just like they do." It's sarcastic. "My opinion," he word dokeo, it says "I think" in the King James, that doesn't sound good, it sounds like Paul's saying, "Well, I...I think I have the Holy Spirit." Not Paul. I also have the Spirit of God that I'm giving you divine revelation. It's a frequent word used to speak of something absolutely certain.

All right should a person stay single? Yes if he has the gift, yes. Why? Cause o all these reasons**.** And so, this is important to say to the Corinthians. So all the single people are saying, "Well, that's very good, but there's one other factor." There's one other factor in the whole thing and that's verses 36 to 38 and that is the fathers. Do you know marriages were arranged by the father? And you can't

have a whole section to single people without saying something to dads. And, dads, I hope this says something to you, it really says something to me.

In Old Testament society, the arranged marriage was the norm. And so, Paul's got to talk to the fathers. It was true in the Roman society. Did you know that in the Roman society the parents chose the partners? Andy in fact, in the history of the Roman Empire they said that one of the beginnings of ;the breakdown of Roman authority was when Roman parents lost the right to counteract the desires of their children to get married. That began the break down of the home that was part of the seeds of the dissolution of the whole Roman Empire. And so even in the Roman Empire, at this time, the parents chose. Jewish Old Testament, the parents chose. For example, Hagar selected a wife for Ishmael. Abraham selected a wife for Isaac. Judah's selection of Tamar to be the wife of his son Er. These are all common in the Old Testament. Jacob was told what family to go to, wasn't he, to find his wife. There was a little bit of option there, cause there was a few daughters to choose from. And he worked seven years and they gave him the wrong one with a veil on. Man, I'm telling you, if you're going t marry somebody, check out what's under that veil before you get to the ceremony. Pull that kind of stuff.

But there was the selection of the family. There are even instances when a king or a priest selected a wife. Pharaoh gave a wife to Joseph in Genesis 41. And another Pharaoh gave a wife to Hadad the Edomite in 1 Kings chapter 11, verse 19. Jehoiada, to the high priest, got two wives to give to the boy king Joash in 2 Chronicles 24:3. Didn't do him any favors in doing that, a high priest of all people. But it happened.

It was a parental thing. And history tells us that around the year 500 B.C., marriage brokers even developed, called "Shadkan". These brokers were just available. You remember "Fiddler on the Roof, "Matchmaker, matchmaker, make me a match?" That's precisely what those were, traditional Jewish marriage brokers. And when you had your daughter come to the a e where you wanted to get her married, you just went off to the marriage broker and said, "I want one this and so, and which such-and-such background from a such-and-such thing," and all of a sudden the marriage broker would look through his listings and, you know, I don't know whether it was like the line up, where they all came in and you picked, but there was a...there was a working out of the situation. This was historic. And the family would work it through the broker. How'd you like that, girls? It would be interesting.

Now some even f eel that in Israel's early history, the bride and the groom had absolutely nothing to say about it. It's been said that they were just totally unconsidered. But I don't agree with that. I think that as best we can tell from the Scripture, the young man had something to say about it. That it wasn't just his father walking in on the day of the wedding and saying, "Here's your bride." "Oh, hello, it's nice to meet you. You know, it wasn't that. And it wasn't, "Well, you're going to marry, you know, what's her name, whatever you want, I'm not interested in what you want, you're marrying her." It wasn't that kind of a situation. Apparently the young manhad the right to some kind of choice.

There's a couple of places where we could look but I think 1 Samuel 18:20, "And Michael, Saul's daughter, loved David and they told Saul and the thing pleased him and Saul said, I will give him her." Now here was an illustration of a woman loving a man and a man loving a woman and the father giving consent. So it was not out of the ordinary for such to happen.

So I believe that even though the marriage arranged by the family dominated the society, usually there was some kind of love relationship, or often there was some kind of love relationship and consent from the children.

Song of Solomon expresses tremendous love between two people. It was more than just a political thing. More than just a parental agreement. The will of th e man was involved and I'm sure, also, the will of the woman came into the situation as well.

Now that's pretty much the way it was. The father would decide it and certainly the other would agree and the kids were involved in some way. Maybe there w re times when their will was overruled, but there were times, also, when they were considered as a part of the decision. This was the general pattern.

So, when you come to 1 Corinthians and Paul's writing to these Christian people, they're still in that pattern pretty much if they're Jewish and that was also the Roman pattern that the parents would choose. So he's going to say something to the fathers to help them in their part of the situation. Verse 36, all that to get here. Now as we look at verse 36, it says, and I'm going to read it to you, interpreting it as I read it, "If any father," and that's what the word "man" refers to here. "If any father feels that he behaves himself unfairly toward his virgin daughter, if any father eels that he behaves himself unfairly toward his virgin daughter...

Now what does that mean? Now listen, here's a father, he looks at the world around him, he hears everythingthat Paul is saying about it's better to be single, it's better to be single, it's better to be single. And you know what he decides in his mind? It's better to be single. "I consecrate my little daughter to the Lord; I'm going to give my little daughter to the Lord." That's neat. Fathers, have you ever thought like that? Does your little daughter grow up thinking, "When you going to get married?" Who do you think you're going to marry? And you start from the very first ... you have a boyfriend ... we do this with kids ... many people and pretty soon all they can think about is marriage. Here's a father who says, "I want you to give your whole life to Christ. I want you to devote your whole life to the building of the Kingdom of God. After all, marriage is only temporary and when we get to heaven none of us will be married anyway. I want you to be single and free and you ... and, boy, I'm going to commit you to Jesus Christ and to His service."

What a neat thing for a father to do. Terrific. I mean, I'm really thinking about that. You know, I get, my kids are so young, they'll agree. You know, if I say to Marcy, "Marcy,you're going to be single all your life and just be with us and serve the Lord." She'd say, "Terrific." She doesn't want to get married anyway. That's like one family was telling me that ... we were talking about this and the little guy ... they went home and they were sitting around the table and one of their children said- "You know, after hearing that message. and I love our family so much I don't ever want to get married. I just decided to be a cell beet all my life." So, you can decide that you're children are going to be cell beets all their life when they're little because they're not going to argue, right? They're not going to argue about that.

And here's a father whose done that. "And, man, I'm goingto devote this little life to the Lord. I'm just going to consecrate this little gal to the Lord and I'm not going...I don't want to even gamble with marriage." But you know what happens? He ... the father realizes that he is behaving himself unfairly toward his virgin daughter. You know why? He made a nice decision but, you know, you've got a problem. Verse 36, "If she passes the flower of age," what that means is if she reaches sexual maturity, if she reaches the apex**,** if she reaches the time when she has all of the sexual sensitivities and what happens? "And need so requires." What does need require? That she what? She marries. It becomes necessary, that means.

If I make a vow for my daughter but I realize I'm not being fair with her because now that she's reached sexual maturity, she desires to be married. What do I do? He says, "Let him do what he will, he sins not. Let them ... what? ... marry." Let them get married. It was a nice idea, but she didn't get the gift. The Spirit of God didn't give her that gift and that's a gift the Spirit of God gives. If she doesn't have the gift, the father's saying, "Man, it's obvious she doesn't have the gift, all she talks about is this guy." And apparently there's a guy there or it wouldn't say, "let them marry." There's a them, somebody's hanging around. And, you see, he is behaving unfairly toward his daughter because if he doesn't let her get married he's going to tempt her to ,,morality physically to immorality in her mind and to seduction. And so he realizes, "I can't do this to my lovely little daughter as much as I'd want to devote her to the Lord, there's a guy here and she's saying yes, yes, yes, and I'm saying no, no, no, and it's not right.'

So, dads, hey, it's a super idea if you want to devote your daughter to being single, or your son. But if they get to the age of sexual consciousness and they require marriage, let them marry. It's no sin. You don't have to keep some vow. We're not in the vow age anymore.

Now, verse 37 takes the other side. "Nevertheless, he that stands steadfast in his heart," and there is the fatherly decision, the father's firm resolution, in my heart I have decided that she's going to be single, or he's going to be single. You made a firm resolution, good, God leads through a father's decision, don't you believe that? God leads a family through the father. "And he makes that decision having no necessity," what does that mean? The daughter doesn't need to get married. She's not

putting any pressure; she has no special sexual urge for marriage. And so her father has no obligation. He stands steadfast in his heart, she has no necessity, he then is given power over his own will, he's so decreed in his own heart that he'll keep his virgin daughter, he does what ... he does well. Father, you made a good decision.

You know today how that would go over? "Well, why aren't you married?" "My father decided I should be single." "Cruel man." The Bible says he does what? He does what? He does well. If you were to decide that for your daughter and your daughter had no great strong sexual urge, you would do well, father, mother, you would do well. It's a good thing.

So, he says, "Father, look if you stand fast in your heart and you feel it's right, and she has no necessity for marriage, you have power over your own will, you so decree in your heart to keep her a virgin ... fine, you're doing very well." What is all this saying to you? I'll tell you what it's saying to me. God wants some people...what?... single. And we do well to consider that with our own children.

So then, verse 38, "He that gives her in marriage, does well, but he that gives her not in marriage does ... what? ... better?" You're kidding. Is that what it says? That's what it says. You say, "Who said it?" God. "What do you mean?" Underline verse 38 is the gift. You don't do your daughter any favors if she doesn't have the gift, right? But if there's the gift of singleness and marriage isn't necessary for your son or your daughter, that's fine to give her in marriage, the gift is optional, it's the only one that's optional. But if you don't, you're doing even better if you'll let hem use the gift. It's the question of advantage, people.

Well, this is an interesting chapter, isn't it? What is it saying to us? marriage is good. And for most of us, it's the only way to live. And I love it. And I wouldn't trade it. And I...I know you wouldn't either and it's fulfilled the way God designed it. But, listen to me, marriage is good, fulfill it, enjoy it, sustain it for life but so is singleness good.

Fulfill it, enjoy it, use it for God's glory. That's the message of 1 Corinthians our Christianity will exist and grow and mature and prosper whether you're married or single. That isn't the issue. So he settles once and for a 1 the Corinthians' hang up about how marriage effected spirituality. It has no effect. What you are, married or single, has no bearing on you spirituality. God wants some married for special reasons and some single. And I think, beloved, in the church we need to beware of this, we need to recognize it and we need to be accepting and loving with those that are single and if we're single, with those that are married and understand the full complement of the body of Christ. Let's pray.

For our time this morning, Lord, we ... we ask Your Holy Spirit to seal to us what we've learned and shared and expressed and to teach us and -to help us to tea h others these same great truths. Thank You for all the parts of the body of Christ, the married ones and the single ones, those set aside in

marriage to be examples, to raise children, to nurture them in the things of he Lord, to teach them Your ways and those set aside in singleness to be free to serve You, to be mobile, to be available, to be single-minded. For that full complement in Your design of the body, we give You gratitude. Father, help us to search our own hearts and look carefully at the options of Your callings before us and choose wisely and well for us and for our children. And we'll praise You in Christ's name. Amen.

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