

Empire Church of the Brethren
Sunday Service Sermons

19 May 2024

Being Single

Text: "Let every one lead the life the Lord has assigned to them, and in which God has called them . . . Keeping the commandments of God." *1 Cor. 7:17,19.*

Statistics indicate that over one-third of the adults in America are single.

I guess I am single now.

Do widows and widowers count as single adults?

I guess so.

Single by lot not choice.

Participants in a group session were asked to introduce themselves and tell something about their lives.

One woman told her name and said, "I'm just an old maid!"

The comment seemed to reflect the put-down of a society that has thought it less than okay to be single.

Political analysts, economists, community leaders, and churches are giving more attention to this significant segment of society.

Yet many single people experience the feeling that they have a disease or are a disgrace or a disaster.

It is okay to be single?

The Bible says yes.

The lifestyle and teaching of Jesus.

The lifestyle of Jesus.

The lifestyle of our Lord Jesus is an affirmation of singleness.

The incarnation was secured in the context of a family.

Could God not also have decided for Christ to fulfill his ministry in the setting of a marriage?

He could have, but he chose not to do so.

Should we then think it weird or impossible for someone today to have a meaningful life as a single person?

The teaching of Jesus.

Matthew 19:10-12 gives the closing comments of some teaching Jesus gave on divorce and the continuity of marriage.

The disciples noted the high standard established by the Master and said, "It is not good to marry". Jesus responded: "That is something which not everyone can accept, but only those for whom God has appointed it.

For while some are incapable of marriage because they were born so, or were made so by men, there are others who have themselves renounced marriage for the sake of the kingdom of heaven. Let those accept it who can".

Jesus also said, "In the resurrection they neither marry, nor are given in marriage". *Matt. 22:30.*

This indicates eternal life to be the highest goal and relationship for now and forever.

Whether by choice or by circumstance, it is okay to be single.

The lifestyle of Jesus and his teaching affirm singleness as an acceptable lifestyle.

Paul's affirmation.

Although the immorality of Corinth and the expected return of Christ are the background for his thoughts, Paul also offers an affirmation for singleness:

"I wish that all were as I myself am".

It is possible to live as a single person and realize it is a "special gift from God".

Paul also states: "To the unmarried and the widows I say that it is well for them to remain single as I do."

This was a radical statement for Paul's time.

The old Testament does not have a word for bachelor.

An early Jewish document mentions seven types of persons who would be excommunicated from heaven, and the list begins with "a Jew who has no wife."

In a society in which marriage was prevalent and anything else considered less than normal, Paul said it was okay to be single.

Acceptance and opportunity.

Acceptance.

Paul's focus is on accepting one's circumstance and accentuating the unique opportunity.

"Only, let every one lead the life which the Lord has assigned to them".

The most important issue is "keeping the commandments of God."

Whether single or married, obedience to God's will is desired.

Here is a quote from Intervarsity Press book by Ada Lum entitled: "Single and Human", from 1977.

The most important issue for an unmarried woman is not, "How can I find a husband so that I may be happy?"

It is, rather, "How can I live out the creative life that God intended in love for all men and women to have?"

This is neither to say that we repress any hope for marriage in God's gracious will nor that we refuse to face the agonizing problems inherent in the unmarried state.

Rather it is to affirm that both our natural desire for marriage and all of our problems in not being married are under the control of a compassionate Lord."

This also means that those who are married must accept and affirm those who are single and should not give them feelings of inferiority or stigma.

Let all say to them by word and deed, "You're okay!"

Opportunity.

A single person, especially one without children, has a unique opportunity to serve Christ through the church and in the community.

"The unmarried person is anxious about the affairs of the Lord, how to please the Lord; but the married person is anxious about worldly affairs, how to please their mate and their interests are divided."

A single person does not have the responsibility ties of a married person.

This gives no support for laziness on the part of the married, but it does encourage singles to greater utilization of a unique opportunity.

Is it okay to be single?

Yes!

The best affirmation is found in the salvation we receive in Christ.

"You were bought with a price; do not become slaves of men. So, brethren, in whatever state each was called, there let them remain with God."

Are we faithful where we are?

Are we keeping the commandments of God?

Ada Lum concludes her helpful little book about being single with these words: "God doesn't intend, in the slightest, for us singles to live second-rate lives.

Neither does he intend that our own lives should be lived out simply as dull reflections of some kind of so-called sublimated, compensating life.

If we're living life God's way, we're not substituting for marriage.

We are living in the very best way that he has lovingly planned for us all along."

The secret to a fulfilling life "IN Christ", is to know that you know that you are living the life he commissioned you to live.

For him, His Father, and your neighbor.

Neighbor being the one who can benefit from your involvement in their life.

Be Christ!

For yourself and for others.

In that the Kingdom of God comes among us.

And life for us and others is more complete.

Remember he came that our JOY might be complete, fulfilled everything it was meant to be.

Now and forever!