**On Singleness: The Inclusive Love of God**

Excerpt from [*Loveology*](http://links.zondervancorporation.mkt4728.com/ctt?kn=2&ms=NDY0MDAzNDAS1&r=NzA0Njk3MjYyNTkS1&b=0&j=NDgwOTA1NTI4S0&mt=1&rt=0) by John Mark Comer, Commentary and questions by Fred Bittner

From its inception, Christianity was the most radical movement of all time. The incredible nature of the love of God reshaped all cultural norms of the day. This became evident when Jesus took a child in His arms and said,

*Whoever welcomes one of these little children in My Name welcomes Me; and whoever welcomes Me does not welcome Me but the One who sent Me.*- John9:37

In society, children were grouped with women and slaves. They had no rights and were considered little more than possessions. But, Jesus changed all of that with His inclusive love. With one statement, He gave children value.

God continued to show His inclusive love when He gave great value to women when Paul wrote,

*Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the Church and gave Himself up for Her.*- Ephesians 5:25

God placed wives as valued partners in marriage.

But there is another segment of the church, which is often overlooked, or minimized. That group includes those who have never been married, and those who are no longer married. This group lives with the constant question, “When are you going to find someone?”

In the time of Jesus, a woman had to get married to survive, and if for some reason she lost her husband, she was expected to marry again. But God’s inclusive love extended to singles as well.

The apostle Paul, proclaimed that singleness was a gift from God. In fact he wished that we were all as he was.

John Mark Comer, in the book [*Loveology*](http://links.zondervancorporation.mkt4728.com/ctt?kn=16&ms=NDY0MDAzNDAS1&r=NzA0Njk3MjYyNTkS1&b=0&j=NDgwOTA1NTI4S0&mt=1&rt=0), asserts that being single is gift from God.

*Singleness was a radical idea in Paul’s time. To stay single was to carry a stigma for your whole life and to risk dying in abject poverty. But not only was singleness okay in the early Church, it was encouraged! Historians argue the early Church was the first movement ever to hold out singleness as a viable way of life.*

*Do you have the calling and ability from God to live single in order to serve God in a greater capacity? Make sure you get that last part. For followers of Jesus, the point of singleness isn’t freedom from responsibility. It’s freedom for more responsibility. Paul thinks it’s great if you stay single. At the end of the chapter he says he thinks it’s “better” than marriage. But Paul isn’t saying you should abdicate responsibility, work part-time, go surfing every day, travel a bit, play in a band that never goes anywhere, and do nothing but chill for ten years of your life. Does that sound anything like the Gospel to you? To Paul, the point of singleness is to serve God in ways you can’t if you’re married.*

If you are single, whether you want to be single or not, you have an opportunity to share God’s inclusive love with others. Don’t spend your time wondering when life will be different. Invest your time in service to Christ. God has given you this time to do great things for Him. The gift may only be yours for a season, so serve the Lord with gladness. If the Lord has a different plan for you down the road, He will bless you in ways you cannot imagine.

The family of God is filled with very different people, who are all joined together by the blood of Christ. That is what makes us family. We all have a place in the Kingdom, and we all have a ministry. If you are single right now, what is your ministry?

**Study Questions**

1.How does a person know if they have the gift of singleness? Is there some deciding factor? See 1 Corinthians 7:9, 1 Corinthians 7:36-38

2.Of the many ministries in your church, how many of those positions are held by unmarried people (nursery workers, Sunday School teachers, servers, etc.)?

3.How can we encourage single people to focus more on ministry? See 1 Corinthians 7:32-35.

4.The overwhelming majority of singles face the "When are you going to get married” question from well-meaning Christian friends. If singleness is indeed a gift, then are we encouraging our single brothers and sisters or discouraging them?

5.What is Paul’s encouragement to all Christians in 1 Corinthians 7:29-31? See also Matthew 10:34-36.

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I'm also the author of a couple books; [My name is Hope: anxiety, depression, and life after melancholy](http://mynameishope.org/), and my most recent is[Loveology: God. Love. Marriage. Sex. And the never-ending story of male and female](http://www.amazon.com/Loveology-Love-Marriage-Never-Ending-Female/dp/0310337267/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1391533818&sr=8-1&keywords=loveology) with Zondervan.

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