

Solo or Duo!

I. INTRO:

- A. **Dr. Les** - Back from Burma. *CHW's*
- B. **Note**, Paul's context in this chapter leans actually to **celibacy** more than **marriage**. Yet, in the midst of his discourse on celibacy he gives **extraordinary advice** to married couples.
 - 1. See the transition in vs.10 **Now to the married**.
- C. **God is not *against* sex...**He is **for** marriage for some & for celibacy for others!
- D. **Singleness is an issue for everyone**. We are all single at some time.
 - 1. Before marriage, after divorce, after being widowed[**Single for all seasons**(m/w who never marry); **Single for a season**(adults who will be married); **Single again**(separated; divorced widowed)]
 - 2. **Myth: "God's best is marriage. Singleness is second best."** (**Nope**: vs.8, 35)
 - 3. **Singleness is important for some seasons & some reasons**.
- E. **Stats**: In 1960 Men were marrying at age 23, women age 20. **Today**: m-27, w-23.
 - 1. Waiting longer to get married **but** not waiting to have sex.
 - 2. **More are having sex in the meanwhile** [**known today as friends w/benefits!**]
 - 3. At turn of last cent_[1900] **92%** of brides were virgins; 1960-65 **43%**; 1980's only **14%**.¹

F. Solo or Duo?

- 1. Ok, it's the Olympics, your sitting in the stands at **Track & Field**.
 - a) **Which is better the solo/individual races, or the relay races?** [100m or the relay race?]
- 2. Your now sitting in the bleachers court side at the **Tennis Matches**.
 - a) **Which is better, singles or doubles?**
- 3. Lets move indoors to the **Ice Rink**.
 - a) **Which is more beautiful, the solo competitors with their speed & strength, or the partner doubles competition with their skill of being in perfect sync?**
- 4. **WWF Wrestling**.
 - a) **Which is better...never mind!**
- 5. In **Synchronized Swimming**, going solo would look pretty funny & be pretty hard to do the "sync"!
- 6. In the **Shot-put** it would look equally strange to see 2 men throwing the shot-put... together???
- 7. So, **Which is more pleasing to watch? More pleasing to the judge? Well both are!**
- 8. In life there comes a time to choose to **fly solo, or form a duo!**

¹ Mark Driscoll, 1 Cor.7 Podcast.

9. In Prov.30:18,19 the writer Agur sees **beauty** in **both**: There are three things which are too wonderful for me, Yes, four which I do not understand: The way of an eagle in the air (solo), The way of a serpent on a rock (solo), The way of a ship in the midst of the sea (solo), And the way of a man with a virgin (duo).

II. SOLO OR DUO? CELIBACY & MARRIAGE IS A GIFT! (1-9)

A. So, Paul starts with the question of **singleness** (1,7,8):

1. He teaches that celibacy is **good** (1).
2. That celibacy can be **tempting** (2,9).
3. That celibacy is **a gift from God** (7).
4. That celibacy is **wrong for married people** (3-5).
 - a) One camp at this time was encouraging **sexual abstinence** in marriage. (the Essenes)
 - b) Another camp taught **marriage** was **wrong** or **unprofitable**. (i.e. Stay single)
 - c) Paul speaks *against* both of these.

B. (1a) Paul finally gets to discuss the several topics they had inquired from him.

C. (1b) **Touch** – sexual relations. (explained in vs.2a)

D. (2b) **Let each man/woman have** - reflects a Greek idiom for “*Let them have sexual relations.*”

1. Jewish people saw **married sexual intimacy** as the best deterrent to **sexual immorality**, and **Paul here agrees!**
2. **Yet** as John MacArthur states, “Marriage cannot be reduced simply to being God’s **escape valve** for **the sex drive**. Paul does not suggest that Christians go out and find another Christian to marry only to keep from getting into moral sin. He had a much higher view of marriage than that.”
3. Marriage is not the lesser of 2 evils, **but** as a necessary safeguard against evil.

E. Scripture gives at least **5 reasons** for marriage:

1. **Procreation** - God commanded Adam and Eve to **be fruitful and multiply** Gen.1:28
2. **Pleasure** - Proverbs says, **And always be enraptured/intoxicated with her love**. (with the wife of his youth) 5:19b [5a **Let her breasts satisfy you at all times**]
 - a) *Song of Solomon* centers around the physical attractions and pleasures of marital love.
3. **Partnership** - Woman was created for man to be **a helper suitable for him** (Gen. 2:18)
 - a) **Friendship** between husband & wife is one of the key ingredients of a good marriage.
4. **Picture** - of the church.

- a) For this reason a man shall leave his father & mother & be joined to his wife, & the two shall become one flesh. This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning **Christ and the church**. Eph. 5:31,32
5. **Purity** - It protects from sexual immorality by meeting the need for physical fulfillment.
- F. **His own wife**(2) - Prov.5:15-18 Drink water from your own cistern, And running water from your own well. Should your fountains be dispersed abroad, Streams of water in the streets? Let them be only your own, And not for strangers with you. Let your fountain be blessed, And rejoice with the wife of your youth.
1. "*Benedict's Scrapbook* tells of a publisher who offered a prize for the best answer to the question, "Why is a newspaper like a good woman?" The winning answer was this. "***It's like a good woman, because every man should have one of his own and not look at his neighbor's!***"
- G. (3a) **Render** – payback, to pay one's dues, to render.
1. The *present imperative* indicates "*habitual duty*".
- H. (3b) **Due** – obligation, debt, due. "The specific obligation involved in the marital union." Lenski
1. Spouses are sexually indebted to each other & must regularly pay up...**But what a wonderful bill to pay!**
- I. (4) **Release your rights to one another!**
1. As I say this, may I remind all the men in 6 more chapters Paul teaches us regarding love, "**Love suffers long and is kind;...does not behave rudely, does not seek its own,**"!
- J. (5) Those persons who have opted for **celibacy in marriage** are not *spiritually superior* at all.
1. Their withdrawal has deprived their spouses of something that is rightfully important.
 2. Sexual relations between a husband and his wife are **God-ordained** and **commanded**. The only exceptions are:
 - a) **Mutual** - **with consent**. (lit. in symphony/ συμφωνου)
 - b) **Temporary** – **for a time**; and **come together again**.
 - c) **Important Reason** – **that you may give yourselves to fasting & prayer**.
- K. (6) **Abstinence within marriage** is their idea, **not** Paul's. [**This** in vs.6, refers to vs.5]
- L. (7) **Was Paul ever married?**
1. The NT **never** tells us, **neither** does **extra biblical** literature.
 2. Jewish tradition said, "If a man did not marry & have children, he was to have 'slain his posterity,' 'to have lessened the image of God in the world.'"

- a) Yet, this doesn't prove Paul **didn't** have a wife, as there were *godly Jewish bachelors* like **John the Baptist & Jesus**.
3. Most argue Paul was married because he was on the Sanhedrin.
- a) Acts 26:10 **This I also did in Jerusalem, and many of the saints I shut up in prison, having received authority from the chief priests; and when they were put to death, I cast my vote against them.**
- (1) His ability to **vote** shows he was a member. And members were required to be married & have children.
- b) **However**, the problem w/this argument lies in the fact that these rules didn't come around until late in the 1st century or early in the 2nd...many years after Paul's death.
- c) **Now**, he could have still been married, **but** his occupation didn't require it at this time.
- d) **What we do know...**he was single at this time (around 55ad) **& remained so until his death.**
4. **Here's the possibilities:** [1] He was a widower. [2] He was married & his wife divorced him upon his conversion to Christianity. [3] He was unmarried.
- M. (7) **Gift** – (χαρισμα) gracious gift, *a gift given out of grace*.
- Both take a real **gift** to be able to carry out!
- N. **Obviously, singleness has many practical advantages:**
- It allows much greater **freedom** in where and how a person **serves** the Lord.
 - He is **freer** to move around and to set his own hours and schedule.
 - Married persons have many **cares and concerns** that the unmarried do not have (vv. 32-34).
 - Rachel Saint** (brother Nate Saint) **served as a single missionary among the Auca Indians of Ecuador for many years without companionship. She poured out her life and her love to the Indians and found great blessing and fulfillment.** [Marilyn Laszlo, Papua New Guinea]
- O. (8) **Unmarried** – Referring to those who have been divorced & are not yet remarried, **rather than** those who have always been single.
- P. **Widow** – Those who have lost their partners through death.
- Q. **Good** – Note he doesn't say it is *better* but **good**.
- R. (9) The antidote is marriage, within which individuals may give legitimate expression to their sex drive.
- "Burn"** was used throughout ancient romances to describe the arousal of passion, often (*metaphorically*) through Cupid's fiery darts.
 - However, *This is not justification for* running off & getting married quickly, because you are "burning"!**

- a) * No, that simply helps you to determine which “gift” God gave you. *
- b) **If they cannot exercise self control** – i.e. having passion, **thus** needing to get married.
- c) It is not an excuse to say “**I can’t help myself**” or “**I have no self-control over it.**”
 - (1) For Paul tells us in the Galatia letter that self-control is a “**fruit of the spirit**”.
To not control the self is a “**fruit of the flesh**”.
- d) He surely **couldn’t** tell the Thessalonians, “**For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you should abstain from sexual immorality; that each of you should know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honor, not in passion of lust, like the Gentiles who do not know God.**” He couldn’t command them to do something, they couldn’t do!

S. There are several things that single Christians, who feel their **gift** is being **married**, yet haven’t found a mate, ought to do:

1. **First**, they should not simply seek to be married, **but** should seek a person they can *love, trust & respect*, letting marriage come as a response to that commitment of love
 - a) People who simply want to get married for the sake of getting married run a great risk of marrying the wrong person!
2. **Second**, it is fine to be on the lookout for the *right person*, **but** the best way to **find** the right person is to **be** the right person.
 - a) If believers are right with God **and** it is His will for them to be married, He will send the right person - *and never too late!*
3. **Third**, until the right person is found, our energy should be redirected in ways that will be the most helpful in keeping our minds off the temptation.
 - a) Two of the best ways are **spiritual service** and **physical activity**.
 - b) **We should avoid listening to, looking at, or being around anything that strengthens temptation.**
 - c) We should train our minds to **focus only on that which is good and helpful**, as Paul says in Philippians 4:8.
 - d) **Myth:** “*Living in limbo is terrible. Any decision is better than no decision.*”
Truth: God wants us to learn to be content in any state & to patiently wait on His timing.
 - e) **Singles, don’t think God has cursed you, or that you are in a holding pattern until you get married.** [*you’re not Jr. Varsity!*]
 - (1) **Instead**, God has blessed you at this time to **work on you**, to **mature** you in faith & **use** you for *kingdom service*, in this state of **singleness**.
 - (2) **10% remain single their entire life.**
4. **Fourth**, we should realize that, until God gives us the right person, He will provide strength to resist temptation.
 - a) **God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, that you may be able to endure it** 1 Cor.10:13

5. **Finally**, we should give thanks to the Lord for our situation and be content in it.

- a) **In your singleness, you can be grateful that you have the:** Freedom to be yourself; Freedom to attain your own aspirations; Freedom to take risks; Freedom with use of time; Freedom of mobility; Freedom in financial planning; Freedom to nurture deep relationships; Freedom to lean completely on the Lord; Freedom to serve the Lord in any way.

T. *It's better to remain single than...²*

U. It's better to remain single **than...** To choose a **non-Christian** partner.

V. It's better to remain single **than...** To marry someone who'll **hinder** your spiritual growth.

W. It's better to remain single **than...** To marry someone for the **wrong motive**.

1. **Wrong Motive?** To marry for financial security, for sex, for power, prestige, or fear of growing old alone, or because it is expected.

- a) (Shame on us, & our society, for asking one, *Why aren't you married yet?* As if singleness is a disease)

b) Marry for sex? The **national average** of married couples is $\frac{1}{2}$ hour of **intimacy** a week. If you marry for that purpose...what are you going to do for the other **167 $\frac{1}{2}$ hours?**

(1) **That's as foolish as becoming a pastor to preach on Sun mornings...**

X. It's better to remain single **than...** To marry w/o being willing to **give yourself** to another completely!

Y. *It's better to marry if...*

Z. It's better to marry **if...** Our lives would be more complete w/a mate!

AA. It's better to marry **if...** God leads us to someone we love & loves us.

BB. It's better to marry **if...** Our relationship will illustrate Christ's love for His church.

CC. It's better to marry **if...** We are willing to spend the rest of our days giving more than receiving!

1. "Living successfully w/a partner takes lots of time & practice...practice...practice! Like Ice skaters who spend 8 hours a day in the rink w/their partners, falling & helping each other up & landing hard on the ice again."

2. Two are better than one, Because they have a good reward for their labor. For if they fall, one will lift up his companion. But woe to him who is alone when he falls, For he has no one to help him up. Again, if two lie down together, they will keep warm; But how can one be warm alone? Though one may be overpowered by another, two can withstand him. And a threefold cord is not quickly broken. Eccl.4:9-12

DD. Back to our Olympic analogy...**so, which is more pleasing to The Judge...Solo or Duo?...**
Both are pleasing to him!

² Chuck Swindoll, 1 Corinthians.