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| Topic | Marriage Not the Ultimate Bliss |
| Reference | 1-Corinthians 7: 32-38 |
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| Speaker | Rev Guna Raman |

I-Corinthians 7:

**32** I want you to be free from anxieties. The unmarried man is anxious about the things of the Lord, how to please the Lord.

**33** But the married man is anxious about worldly things, how to please his wife,

**34** and his interests are divided. And the unmarried or betrothed woman is anxious about the things of the Lord, how to be holy in body and spirit. But the married woman is anxious about worldly things, how to please her husband.

**35** I say this for your own benefit, not to lay any restraint upon you, but to promote good order and to secure your undivided devotion to the Lord.

**36** If anyone thinks that he is not behaving properly toward his betrothed, if his passions are strong, and it has to be, let him do as he wishes: let them marry—it is no sin.

**37** But whoever is firmly established in his heart, being under no necessity but having his desire under control, and has determined this in his heart, to keep her as his betrothed, he will do well.

**38** So then he who marries his betrothed does well, and he who refrains from marriage will do even better.

The one area that provides us with the most joy in life and at the same time that provides the most pain in life is in the area of **relationships** that is where we hurt most and that is where we draw the most joy and it does not matter whether you are a single person or you are a married person, relationship is the one that brings us either the most joy or the most pain. Usually, married people tend to want to blame their marriage for their problems, but the point is this

***There are no married people issues; there are only people issues that get worse in marriage.***

It is like marriage does not really create problems, it just reveals them. That means the problems are already there before you were married. It is like if you are walking and you find that your knee is giving problem. The problem is not with the walking, the problem is with the knee.

This passage is always quoted at weddings. Paul says in Ephesians 5:31-32

**31** Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.

**32** This **mystery** is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church.”

What Paul explains is that marriage was given to us as a sign to something else. Marriage is not an end in itself. God created it to point to a higher reality and what is that higher reality and Paul is kind of clear about it. He says, the higher reality is Christ and his church. So C.S. Lewis picks it from there and he says it this way,

*The sun has millions of rays; marriage is only one of them, and the ray should never, in our hearts, replace the thing that it points us to.*

Marriage points to something. It is not an end in itself.

**Key Thoughts On Marriage And Singleness**

1. Marriage is not ultimate; it is a sign and shadow of a higher reality.

When you look at this way, all your ideas and ideals about marriage become very superficial and shallow in the light of what the Bible has to say about marriage. We all tend to think that marriage is the ultimate bliss or at least that is supposed to the ultimate thing, but when Paul talks about marriage he says that marriage points to Christ and marriage points to your eternal family which is the church. According to the bible relationship to Christ are more permanent any more precious than relationship in earthly families. A lot of people think that our relationships are most important and precious to us on this earth. The scripture tells us what is more important is not your relationships here on earth but the relationships that we are going to have in heaven.

In Matthew chapter 22 verse 30 its says

**30** In the resurrection,” Jesus said, “they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heave”

This means that in heaven there will be no marriages. The scripture tells that the earthly relationships we had on earth dissolves at the end of death. The moment we get to heaven it will be a totally new relationship. It will be a better relationship as it will be faultless and flawless. So marriage is not eternal or ultimate, it is only meant for this earth and it points to a higher reality.

Matthew 12:48-49

**48** And when his own mother and brothers asked to see him, Jesus said, ‘Who is my mother, and who are my brothers?’

**49** And stretching out his hand toward his disciples, he said, ‘Here are my mother and my brothers!’

John Piper picking up on this verse says this in one of his books,

*“Jesus is turning everything around. Yes, he loved his mother and his brothers. But those are only temporary relationships. His focus was on those whom he called out for himself. He was calling out a new family where single people in Christ (or people not really in families) are full-fledged family members on a par with all others, bearing fruit for God and becoming mothers and fathers of the eternal kind.”*

There is an eternal family in Christ that will remain but all our earthly families will someday end with this earth and this is what the Bible says in Luke 11:27

**27** Blessed is the womb that bore you, and the breasts at which you nursed!” a woman cried out to Jesus. And he turned and said, “Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and keep it!

The woman was thinking like the culture of the day like nothing is more precious, nothing is like more important than family relationships and Jesus points to something even better than earthly family relationship. He says, Those who hear the world and act on it, this is eternal family and that is more precious and that is more important.

Mark 10:29-30

**29** Jesus said, “Truly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or lands, for my sake and for the gospel,

**30** who will not receive a hundredfold now in this time, houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands, with persecutions, and in the age to come eternal life

He is saying that if you were to reorder your world, whether you are a single or a married person and you don’t put earthly relationships above eternal relationships you will be blessed. You will be blessed both here on earth in your earthly relationships and you will be blessed in eternal relationships and John Piper says it this way

*“Marriage is temporary; and it will finally give way to the relationship to which it was pointing all along: Christ and the church - the way a picture is no longer needed when you see face to face.”*

Marriage only gives you a sign, it gives you a foretaste of the future kingdom of God that is to come. In saying this I do not want to dismiss the importance of the sign, it is one of the very best of God’s gifts to us. It is an indispensible part of the created order, earthly relationship,

**Life goes wrong when you make the symbol ultimate.**

This is where we all go wrong. When we don’t see marriage from an eternal perspective you will think that all you got is that relationship and if you strongly feel that your happiness, your self-worth is totally dependent on being loved romantically, if you believe that marriage and a good romance is one indispensible key to be happy and that you cannot live without it, that you got to have it to be happy then if you get into a relationship or if you are already in a relationship, you are going to mess it up and you are going to get into a lot of hurt and pain because you are putting expectations that is not meant to be placed upon another person. You are idolizing the person; the relationship has become idolatry in your life. You are expecting from that person only what God can give to you and it all goes wrong. There is a myth in our culture that says, *my happiness is tied to romantic feelings*. If I feel romantically towards someone I will be so happy, so I did feel romantically for this person. After we got married I have lost that sense of romance and I am disappointed, I am looking for that romantic feeling. You have exalted the relationship beyond what is meant to be. *The most widely worshipped false god in our culture today is that we think romantic love “completes us.”*

If we are shaped by the culture, if we are being shaped by Hollywood, it kind of resonates, it kind of feels that is correct. It is like, I need someone to complete me OR I will be incomplete until or unless you love me. So we sit in the car and turn on the radio and suddenly we hear Celine Dion singing, I am everything I am because you loved me and again our heart, it rubs with Hallelujahs that is what this is. That is our culture people. It is like you hear it in the songs, you see it in the movies but you talk to these Hollywood people like McDermott for example once in an interview said this, “***Most Hollywood people are relationship junkies”***. That is an interesting way to describe a relationship. You get a high off a relationship like a way you do drugs, like you got to go from one to the next. Most psychologist say that an infatuation takes at most 18 months to wear off and then you need a new high. So if you are in a relationship with someone, do not get married so quickly, wait for 18 months and see whether the feelings are still there and if it is still there may be you should consider, if not it’s over, move on. We are not created to be completed by the love of another person. We are created to be completed by the love of Jesus and that is what Paul is pointing to in our text here.

Lonely, insecure, unhappy single people will become lonely insecure, unhappy married people. The drug of a new relationship fixes only for a short time but when it wears off it will leave you craving for more. The problem that loneliness and insecurity and unhappiness are not cured by another human being. The cure comes from your relationship with Jesus Christ, is the love of Jesus that cures you not the love of another person. Gary Thomas in his book The Sacred Search says this,

*“Marriage doesn’t solve emptiness; it exposes it… If someone can’t live without you, he or she will never be happy living with you either.”*

Marry someone who does not depend on you to make him or her happy. We are not the source of their happiness because we weren’t designed to meet the deep soul needs of another human being.

We cannot put that kind of an expectation on a human being, only God can make you wholly happy, only God can fulfill your life and if you take that which God only can do for you and put into another person you will crush that person with your expectation, only Jesus can do that.

According to Paul and according to Jesus in these verses that we just saw, we are not a failure if we do not produce biological children. If you are a couple and you have been married for several years and you are praying to God and you are saying, God give me a child and God has not yet given you a child you are not a spiritual failure just because you do not have biological children, but you are a failure if you do not produce spiritual children because it is all about eternity people.

That puts us all whether we are married or single on the same level. God does not see you as a first class Christian just because you can produce a lot of biological children and God does not look at another person who does not have children and say, this one not populating the earth, not so great. He does not do that. When you enter eternity what will matter is no longer your earthly relationships. What is going to matter is spiritual relationships and that is the reason why if you are a parent today your primary responsibility is to disciple your children to Christ so that your natural family becomes your eternal family. Because what is going to be important is that you populate heaven, we all end up there eventually if we are in Christ, therefore as parents our kids becomes our first mission field.

2. Singleness is not an inferior state to marriage.

1-Corinthians 7:7 says this

(Regarding marriage) I wish that all were as I myself am. (Single) But each has his own gift from God, one of one kind and one of another.

This is Christianity lead theologian taking, together with Christianity’s found we Jesus both of them were single people, and therefore if you and I look down on single people we are looking down on Jesus and Paul. Single people always get a raw deal in church; it is hard to be a single person in Church. Married people are always trying to fix them up. Single people have got a lot of pressure in church.

Some times in the church we talk as if marriage was so much more superior than you are single. If you are single there is something wrong with you, you are either uncommitted or you don’t want to commit to or you are unwanted or something else wrong with you. That is not true because some of the most messed up and immature people are actually married people. Tim Keller in his book, The Meaning Of Marriage, it is a great book and he has one full chapter on singlehood and in that chapter he talks about some of the super ridiculous things that married people say to single people. He says

“As soon as you are satisfied with God alone He will bring you somebody special into your life.” Now when we are going to be satisfied with God alone? It is a journey for all of us, which married person can attest to the fact that I found my spouse when I was satisfied with God alone. It does not happen that way. Another thing the people says, the reason you are single is because you are too picky, it is like God is saying I bring this person and you don’t want. It punishes the single person. Another one is this, “Before you can marry someone wonderful you have to become someone wonderful.” That kind of thing is like when I am going to ever become someone wonderful, it mean to say that before we marry we became the most wonderful person on earth and then you found someone wonderful. It does not happen that way. So Tim Keller puts it this way,

*“Under all these statements is the premise that a single life is (a 2nd class life) a state of deprivation for people not yet fully formed for marriage.”*

And that is not true because marriage is not the ultimate. Look at how Paul says it in 1 Corinthians 7:29

**29** The appointed time has grown very short. From now on, let those who have wives live as though they had none…

**30** For the present form of this world is passing away.

That is the reason why he say that you ought to live as though you do not have a wife. He means that the world is passing away and along with it marriage will pass away, biological families will pass away, so what he is saying that if you are married person you should be reflecting on the fact that your marriage is not permanent, it is not the ultimate. If you are a single person, you should reflect on the fact that your situation is not permanent either. Both situations are like and momentary and soon they will give way to what is permanent and ultimate which is Christ and the church.

3. Both marriage and singleness are temporary gifts God uses for the fulfillment of his purposes.

1 Corinthians 7:7

But each has his own gift from God, one of one kind and one of another.

What Paul is saying here is simply the fact that both marriage and singleness in this verse are gifts and when he uses the word gifts, the Greek word for this is “charisma” which actually literally means spiritual empowerment, which means to say that God gives you an empowerment. If you are a single person God empowers you to be a single person. He gives you the grace to be a single person. If you are a married person God empowers you to be a married person and it could be for a season. It is temporary; it could be a special time of empowerment. So if it is true then you have not have seen this, the Bible says singleness is a gift. You will be empowered as a single person, may be for a season God will keep you single, maybe He wants you to complete your education, may be you are in your late 20s but you are working on something. It is better for you to be a single person at that time, it is a season in your life and God allows you to be single. He gives you the empowerment. May be there are some character issues he wants to work in you, some things he can only teach you as a single person that you will never learn as a married person. He empowers you to be a single person. May be he wants to use you to demonstrate to your friends that happiness and commitment is not found in romance but it is found in God that you could be a testimony to them as someone single and He gives you a gift for singlehood, but at the same time marriage is also a gift from God and marriage is a gift that teaches you about the love of God because there is nothing on earth that actually helps us understand the love of God and to apply it in practical ways like in marriage, because the one person who will affect you the most in life is your spouse. If someone else can come into your life and tell you something and it matters not but if you spouse tells you the same thing suddenly you are troubled. A marriage relationship is where you apply the gospel and you understand the love of God and besides marriage is a gift because people it is the only arena where a man and a woman can enjoy sex without sex destroying them. You take sex out of the context of marriage and you try to enjoy sex outside of marriage it will always destroy you, it will always lead you to the wrong end, it will always bring more pain and mess and trouble and consequences but the same sex you enjoy in the context of marriage it will bless and prosper you, this is amazing.

1 Corinthians 7:3

Because of the temptation to sexual immorality, each man should have his own wife and each woman her own husband.

So both singleness and marriage are gifts from God.

4. If you are asking “Should I get married”, ask (a) “Do I have the gift?”

How do you know if you have a gift, so Paul says it this way in 1 Corinthians 7:9

For it is better to marry than to be aflame with passion.

In other words if we are aflame with passion, it means that if you are guy and you see a girl and you think “Wow! She is hot” then you have the potential to be aflame with passion, it is better for you to get married. Paul describes himself and he says God has given him the gift of singleness.

1 Corinthians 7:37

But whoever is firmly established in his heart, being under no necessity but having his desire under control, …he will do well.

If that is you then probably God has given you the gift of singleness, at least now for the time being and you should take advantage of that. If you are not like that ask God for a spouse, pray like crazy, cry out to God, it is okay to tell God give me a spouse so that I don’t fall into sin and destroy your plans for my life.

5. If you are asking, “Should I get married?”, ask (b) “Is it time?”

If you are dating someone right now, you also have to pray God is this is the time, because Paul says it this way, in the context of his culture and what was going on at this time historically. He says in 1 Corinthians 7:26

I think that in view of the present distress it is good for a person to remain as he is.

In the context is Paul is writing this in an era of history where persecution against Christians is reaching high and Christian families are being torn apart and sold into slavery and butchered in the arenas and it is difficult enough already for a single person to go through this kind of persecution, what if you are married. Your problems are just going to double; the trouble is going to double. So Paul’s conclusion to people is that during this period of time if you are not married it is better than if you are married. So if you can’t remain single that is what he is saying here in this verse to the people. He is talking to them about the issue of timing but the way it applies towards us is this, we have to ask ourselves this question, because we are not in this situation where there was such a persecution where it is better to remain single rather than to be married, but then again we go to ask those questions like, are we financially okay to be married, can we be financially independent, are we rooted sufficiently in scripture, are we looking to each other for happiness that is a very dangerous thing. Do we know how to look to Jesus Christ for our fulfillment and for our happiness? Are we too sensitive about everything in our relationship, do we fight and quarrel all the time because of the superficial sensitivities to the point that it distract us from God and from other people. These are the questions to ask. Can we handle troubles? Can we handle crises together? Do we have the same mission in life? Do we have the same core values and if you are dating someone, our culture tells us this, we have moved so far away from what the scripture calls us to do. Our culture tells us, it is okay to date with no intention of marriage, try first and see how, if it works out.

*Dating is a road that leads to marriage and if you’re not ready for the destination, stay off the road.*

You do not lead the other person on when you are not serious about the relationship. It is going to lead both of you into so much hurt and so much pain, you know it is going to delay what God has for you. There is going to be mess you are going to cleanup, consequences that you have sown that you will have to reap into the future. If you are not serious about marrying this person don’t date the person.

6. Reject the “Find The Perfect Person” myth.

The thinking that we have today is that we need to find the perfect person then I will have the perfect marriage. Where did we get this from? We got it from the movies. You do not know how much Hollywood has served as a pulpit to our lives. We get it from the movies. The movies and serials have got an underlying plot and it always has to do with two people, they come together, somehow destiny brought them together, that they were so meant for each other, they finally found one another and they were aflame with passion for each other, the chemistry and sparks and all of that were so great and before long they got into bed with each other and after that the story kinds of fades away and then if you have a sequel it is so boring nobody goes to watch the movie anymore. The message in all of these movies and serials is very-very clear; everything begins and ends with romance. Romance is everything. Where there is no romance there is no meaning. As a result of that covenanted committed marriage is boring. It never shows up in those serials or in those movies and people don’t believe that, because there is no such thing as a perfect person. You will never find a perfect person on the face of this earth. Only Jesus Christ was so perfect, he came down to this earth and he died for us so that the death that we deserve we may scape because of his death. He pursues you all of his life and he loves you with a last drop of his blood and he will never deny you. He will never forsake you, He will never leave you, He will be there for you until the day of your grave and then He will receive you in the glory that is the true lover of your soul and you dare to exchange him for another man. We cannot replace that kind of a love for an imperfect human love because it will never satisfy you. There are no perfect persons and because there are no perfect person that is why Jesus has to die for them. There is something wrong with the person that you will fall in love with that is why Jesus has to die and his blood has to fix them up. So marriage is about two forgiven sinners doing life together. As a result of that there is going to be pain, there is going to be hurt, there is going to be disappointment, there is going to be all kinds of problem because marriage is never meant to be perfect. It is just two redeemed forgiven people trying to do life together and rediscovering again and again the grace of God in their lives. Time Keller in his book, The Meaning Of Marriage, at the very beginnings of the book he makes a statement that is a little bit astounding, it says

*“You always marry the wrong person.”*

He means that over the years you change physically over the years, they change emotionally, intellectually. Therefore at the altar you think, you married the right person but you got to remember at 10-15-20 years’ time this is going to become a very different person. In that sense you always marry the wrong person and you will begin to change as well. So it is wrong to believe the happiness in marriage depends on finding the perfect person. As a result of that it is not computability that makes up for a happy marriage; it is God’s grace that makes for a happy marriage. It is the ability to learn to forgive one another, it is the ability to accept one another despite our faults and our weaknesses, it is the ability to give grace to one another for the grace that we have received from what Jesus has done for us on the cross.

Marriage is light and momentary and the Christ and the church are eternal realities and we have got to get this, marriage is not the ultimate, it is just a symbol to something that is truly ultimate and that is eternity and if you take the symbol and turn it into the ultimate in your relationship you are idolizing your marriage and as a result of that you will suffer and everything else is built on this principle.

1. **Single person**. If you are single there is nothing wrong with you. God has not removed his favor from you just because you are a single person. You are not under judgment for being a single person, but instead God empowers you to be single and if it is your desire to get married that desire is not wrong or sinful either and you ought to trust that God will bring the right person into your life.
2. **Married people**. Marriage is not everything but eternity is. A marriage is a preparation for eternity. It is in a marriage that you learn the love of God which you will bring with you into eternity. It is the marriage that God conforms you to his image which you will bring with you into eternity. Marriage is about learning forgiveness, marriage is about learning to walk in the grace of God, all this you bring with you into eternity. The other thing is that married people need to be watchful of their mindset and the attitude towards single people. Single people need our encouragement. Rather than pushing them to get married to setting them up with other people we married people need a biblical understanding that both marriage and singleness are all gifts from God will empower the single person with the grace they need while they remain single.
3. **Married and are still without children**. It is a painful thing but I want to tell you that just because you are without children does not mean that God has disfavored you, because from God’s perspective it is more important to make disciples than it is to make babies. What is more important is that you populate heaven and that should be our primary calling. We are a failure when we fail to produce spiritual children.
4. For parents you have to disciple them in Jesus Christ because at the end of the day what matters is eternity.