

To KNOW Christ and one another more deeply,
To CARE for one another in truth and in love,
To GROW as followers of Jesus.
- CG Mission Statement

Worship: Romans 11:33-36

(Here is a psalm/song to help your group as you worship. You can go through it together or in groups in meditation and/or in

Read through the passage out loud several times; then have everyone join in a focused prayer time of praise and thanksgiving. Encourage your group to give praise to God for His attributes that are featured in this passage, and then give thanks for one specific circumstance in their life in which one of these attributes showed up in the last week.

Icebreaker

When was the last time you did something alone that you might usually do with someone else (i.e., go to the movies, to dinner, etc.)? How did it make you feel?

Text for Discussion: I Cor. 7:7-9, 17-28, 32-35

Turn in your Bibles and read this passage aloud together.

Aid for Discussion: Sermon Summary

Have we lost the Biblical vision for singleness? The American church often turns it into a “waiting stage” for marriage, as if we cannot live a full and fulfilled Christian life until we are married. The Apostle Paul says that the single life is a gift to the kingdom of God – as well as a rewarding and full life which can even be preferable to marriage. This can feel like an audacious claim, especially since the church doesn’t have the best track record for how it has treated singleness. So: what is God’s vision for singleness?

The Call to Singleness (1 Cor. 7:17) – Paul isn’t saying we have to convince ourselves that we don’t really feel lonely or that we just need to be more spiritual. Nor is he saying marriage is a bad thing; marriage, sex and family all point to God’s desire to redeem the cosmos and renew all of creation. So why does Paul claim that singleness can be preferable? Because Jesus has fundamentally changed everything. “There is neither male or female, but all are one in Christ” (Gal 3:28). God has made room for singleness and celibacy as a beautiful calling – not as a temporary state on the way to marriage, but one that is extremely honorable in and of itself. (See 1 Cor. 7:38.)

The Gift of Singleness (1 Cor. 7:7) – Paul says some have been given the gift of marriage and others the gift of singleness. These gifts may not feel equal to some of us, but his point is that every Christian is called to be a testimony to Christ’s beauty and glory. When Jesus gives gifts to the church, He gives people (Eph. 4:11). This means each of us – *whatever our stage and state of life* – is a gift to God’s people. And what are the two primary commands of Scripture? To love God and love people. We are made for relationships and there are more relationships in our life than just romantic ones. Christian growth mandates relational richness, and that applies to everyone because the family Jesus is forming is much bigger than the immediate nuclear family our culture tends to idolize and elevate (Matt. 19:29). Pacific Crossroads is not a loose confederation of single people and families; we are a family on a mission for God in our city.

The Hope of Singleness – Jesus cannot stop being good to us.; his value of our worth will always be higher than our own. It’s fascinating to note that Jesus says the greatest love is laying our life down for our friends. One person is not able to carry the full weight and identity of another, which is why – married or single – we need to invest deeply in friendships for the sake of each other’s spiritual and emotional health. We are to be an embodiment of the hope of the Resurrection. Singleness is a billboard for the sufficiency of Christ and the beauty of Heaven. Jesus says we will not be married in Heaven. Which means that singleness cannot be inferior, for that would mean Heaven is inferior as well.

Guiding Question of the Week

(This question is intended as a target for the whole conversation. Do not ask for responses now. It will be repeated later in the study.)

How do we respond to the call, the gift and the hope of singleness?

Questions for Discussion

(Remember it is better to wrestle deeply with two good questions than gloss over many. Sub-bullets are intended for potential follow-up.)

Split up into three groups for the following exercise...

Group 1: The Call of Singleness

- 1) Read through the entire passage (I Cor. 7:7-9, 17-28, 32-35).
- 2) What instructions do you see in this passage regarding the calling of singleness? (Make a list together...)
- 3) How do these instructions apply to your life as a whole, whether you are single or married? If you are married, what do these instructions have to say to you about how to encourage your single brothers and sisters?

Group 2: The Gift of Singleness

- 1) Read through the entire passage (I Cor. 7:7-9, 17-28, 32-35).
- 2) What instructions do you see in this passage regarding the gift of singleness? (Make a list together...)
- 3) How do these instructions apply to your life as a whole, whether you are single or married? If you are married, what do these instructions have to say to you about how to encourage your single brothers and sisters?

Group 3: The Hope of Singleness

- 1) Read through the entire passage (I Cor. 7:7-9, 17-28, 32-35).
- 2) What instructions do you see in this passage regarding the hope of singleness? (Make a list together...)
- 3) How do these instructions apply to your life as a whole, whether you are single or married? If you are married, what do these instructions have to say to you about how to encourage your single brothers and sisters?

Bring the group back together, and ask each group to share their list. Then ask them to share highlights of their discussion/answers to questions 2 and 3.

Ask the entire group the **guiding question of the week as a way of summarizing the entire discussion: How do we respond to the call, the gift and the hope of singleness?**

Praying for One Another

(Here are some ideas from the study to help focus your time in prayer as a group. Use by themselves or along with other prayer requests.)

Conclusion:

- Read Philippians 4:6-7
- Have every single person in the group share a prayer request related to their singleness.
- Have each married person in the group share a prayer request related to their marriage.
- Pray for each other based on the requests.

Experiment of the week

(A suggestion for engagement in following the way of Jesus this week)

Spend 15 minutes every day this week praying about your calling. Ask God to give you clarity with regard to:

- * The key gifts and talents he has given you (make a list of them in prayer)
- * Important experiences he has placed in your life (make a list of them in prayer)
- * Your passions with regard to using your gifts, talents and experiences (make a list of them in prayer)

Write out a statement of calling (one sentence, or several; no more than one paragraph). Bring it to the group to read next week.