



Daily Devotionals: Dear Church | October 2

Week 6 | Honoring God While Single

Dear Church,

This week we're focusing on **singleness**. I think it's important to note up front that when I say "single", I want us to not just think about young adults in their 20s. You can be single and be in your 20s, but you can also be single at the age of 40 or 50 because of having been divorced or widowed too.

I've had the privilege of speaking with a lot of folks who are single themselves. And if there's a generally resounding theme that I hear regarding singleness, it's this: singleness is like purgatory (that place in Catholic teaching where no one wants to be, but God uses to "shape" us into better people).

It's painful, not fun, and lonely. No one I talk to feels like it's God's best for their life. Which is odd when you compare that sentiment to Paul's words in **1 Corinthians 7** when he says,

I wish that all of you were as I am [single]. But each of you has your own gift from God; one has this gift, another has that.

"I wish that all of you were as I am." Here, Paul isn't downplaying marriage. Instead, he's adding value to singleness. Because of his singleness, he's able to spend undivided attention, time, energy, and resources on advancing God's Kingdom. And the same was true of Jesus, too.

Why don't we view singleness that way?

Both Jesus and Paul were single and lived full lives. Was Jesus "less than" because of his singleness? Was Paul "not living his best life" because he was unmarried? Of course not!

But so often, we're tempted to think that if that is *our* reality, that is the case.



That being said, however, because of our hyper-transient, online, family-centric culture (not bad things by any means), many times singleness often means loneliness.

Listen to what the writer Wesley Hill says about the experience of his own singleness:

I often daydreamed about what it would be like to be married, to have a house and children, to have a home of the sort I had growing up, to know that I belonged somewhere. Now...I have a recurrent picture of myself around age sixty, coming home to an empty apartment, having lived all of my adulthood as a single man. I started to think about the particulars of that scenario: not knowing each year where I'd be for Christmas, waking up each morning to a quiet bedroom and having no one across the table from me as I ate my cereal before heading to work, coming home at the end of the day and reading a book with no one to talk to about the parts of it that stood out to me. I began to resonate with what Lauren Winner has called "the loneliness of the everyday": "the loneliness of no one knowing if your plane lands on time, of no one to call if you lock yourself out of your house or your alternator dies."

In our church, **singles shouldn't be "single."**

They might be unmarried, but they should never feel alone. So, here's my question:

What would it look like for our church to become a tightly knitted network of family-like relationships? One where the marrieds receive the benefits of having an unmarried person in their family's life and the unmarrieds receive the benefit of community from the marrieds in their lives?

What would it look like for marrieds to say to those who are unmarried, "Come, worship with us" or "Come, eat with us" or "Come, celebrate with us?"

What would it look like for those who are not married to say to those who are, "I've got time, let me help you" or "I've got energy, let me take that off your plate" or "I'm running after Jesus, I'd love to be a help to you as you raise your kids to do the same?"



There are all kinds of unexplored ways that the widow, the single man, the divorcee, the single mom can unite with the couples and the families to help one another experience the brother/sister familial reality that we see in the New Testament.

Use your imagination. Send some texts. Make invitations. Start with your life group.

As you process through this topic, here are some Scripture, questions, and resources I've found helpful along the way:

1. Like every week, I always want to start with Scripture. I'd encourage you to read **1 Corinthians 7:1-40** carefully to get a feel for what Jesus and Paul say about singleness. What does Paul say about that topic? How might this passage be at odds with our culture's stance on this topic? What resistance do you feel in reading these verses? What questions do those verses they raise for you?
2. Next, think through some of the following questions on this topic:
 - Has there ever been a time when you've experienced singleness? What was/is that like?
 - During that/this season, what was/is your focus on? What was/is your relationship with God like?
 - Think about the bolded question above... What *would* it look like for our church to become a tightly knitted network of family-like relationships? How would that impact you?
 - Think about who you might be able to invite into your family's life (if married) or who you might be able to come alongside of (if unmarried). What names come to mind?
3. Lastly, if you'd like some additional resources on this, here are a couple I'd recommend:
 - I'd recommend *Single, Dating, Engaged, Married* by Ben Stuart (available on Sundays for purchase at a discounted rate!).



- Additionally, I loved a talk from Sam Allberry addressing the topic of singleness from a biblical worldview. Find it on YouTube by searching Understanding Singleness: Sam Allberry.
- I also found another sermon on singleness by Jon Tyson helpful as someone who pastors a lot of singles in New York City. Find it on YouTube by searching The Controversial Jesus | Singleness – Jon Tyson.

I hope these resources are helpful for you. If you have any questions, don't ever hesitate to reach out to us by emailing contact@thecreek.org!

Grace and peace,
Emerson