

GOOD TO GREAT FAMILIES

"GOOD TO GREAT SINGLENESS"

1 CORINTHIANS 7:25-35

This Week's Core Competency

Single-mindedness – I focus on God and his priorities for my life. Matthew 6:33 *But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.*

Paul speaks to a number of Core Competencies in 1 Corinthians 7:25-35. He attributes his advice to unmarried men and women to "the present crisis" (v. 26) not in reference to some peculiar situation facing believers in Corinth but in reference to the fact that "time is short" and that believers will face "many troubles in this life" as "this world in its present form is passing away." His words resonate with the Core Competency Eternity, "I believe there is a heaven and a hell and that Jesus Christ is returning to judge the earth and to establish his eternal kingdom."

He mentions the Lord repeatedly throughout the passage. With regard to an issue the Corinthians had raised, he says, "I have no command from the Lord," implying that an authoritative word from Christ would settle the matter. He refers to "the Lord's affairs" and implies that believers ought to be concerned about such things. These words resonate with the Core Competency Giving Away My Life, "I give away my life to fulfill God's

I wish everyone were single, just as I am. Yet each person has a special gift from God, of one kind or another.

– Apostle Paul

purposes," as well as the Core Competency Trinity, "I believe the God of the Bible is the only true God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit."

Perhaps the apostle speaks most directly to the Core Competency Single-mindedness, "I focus on God and his priorities for my life." Unpacking the relative advantages of staying single over getting married, he repeatedly contrasts the concerns of single men and women with those of married men and women. "An unmarried man is concerned about the Lord's affairs—how he can please the Lord," he says. "But a married man is concerned about the affairs of this world—how he can please his wife." Likewise, "An unmarried woman or virgin is concerned about the Lord's affairs; Her aim is to be devoted to the Lord in both body and spirit," he says. "But a married woman is concerned about the affairs of this world—how she can please her husband." The interests of married men and women alike are divided between the affairs of the Lord and the affairs of this world. Don't get Paul wrong. He isn't saying that *no* married persons can be devoted to the Lord any more than he is saying that *all* single persons will be devoted to the Lord. He is simply stating the obvious, that marriage rightly makes for divided interests, which make "undivided devotion to the Lord" nearly impossible, especially in difficult times. Neither staying single nor getting married is right or wrong in itself. Neither is to be preferred on *moral* grounds. On *practical* grounds, however, staying single has the upper hand for the person who wants to live "in undivided devotion to the Lord."

For Discussion

Matt is dating Sarah and suspects if they continue to date, their relationship will become serious. He, however, isn't sure whether he wants to get married. He thinks most people "get married if they can" but he's not sure that's the best approach. His Christian friends advise him to do what God wants him to do. But if he's not sure what he wants to do, how can he be sure what God wants him to do? What sage advice would you give a Matt or a Sarah in this situation? Would you recommend staying single to either of them?

day 1 ENCOUNTER – read God's word to put yourself in touch with him.

1 Corinthians 7:25-35

25 Now about virgins: I have no command from the Lord, but I give a judgment as one who by the Lord's mercy is trustworthy. 26 Because of the present crisis, I think that it is good for you to remain as you are. 27 Are you married? Do not seek a divorce. Are you unmarried? Do not look for a wife. 28 But if you do marry, you have not sinned; and if a virgin marries, she has not sinned. But those who marry will face many troubles in this life, and I want to spare you this.

29 What I mean, brothers, is that the time is short. From now on those who have wives should live as if they had none; 30 those who mourn, as if they did not; those who are happy, as if they were not; those who buy something, as if it were not theirs to keep; 31 those who use the things of the world, as if not engrossed in them. For this world in its present form is passing away.

32 I would like you to be free from concern. An unmarried man is concerned about the Lord's affairs--how he can please the Lord. 33 But a married man is concerned about the affairs of this world--how he can please his wife-- 34 and his interests are divided. An unmarried woman or virgin is concerned about the Lord's affairs: Her aim is to be devoted to the Lord in both body and spirit. But a married woman is concerned about the affairs of this world--how she can please her husband. 35 I am saying this for your own good, not to restrict you, but that you may live in a right way in undivided devotion to the Lord.

Cf., another translation

25 Now concerning the betrothed, I have no command from the Lord, but I give my judgment as one who by the Lord's mercy is trustworthy. 26 I think that in view of the present distress it is good for a person to remain as he is. 27 Are you bound to a wife? Do not seek to be free. Are you free from a wife? Do not seek a wife. 28 But if you do marry, you have not sinned, and if a betrothed woman marries, she has not sinned. Yet those who marry will have worldly troubles, and I would spare you that. 29 This is what I mean, brothers: the appointed time has grown very short. From now on, let those who have wives live as though they had none, 30 and those who mourn as though they were not mourning, and those who rejoice as though they were not rejoicing, and those who buy as though they had no goods, 31 and those who deal with the world as though they had no dealings with it. For the present form of this world is passing away.

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. (ESV)

EXAMINE – what the passage says before you decide what it means.

* Circle "virgins" in v. 25.

* Box "but" indicating *contrast* in vv. 25, 28 (2x), 33, 34, 35.

* Box "because" and "for" indicating *reason* in vv. 26, 31.

* Bracket "as if" (5x) indicating *comparison* in vv. 29-31.

* Circle "present crisis" in v. 26.

* Underline "the time is short" in v. 29.

* Double underline "this world in its present form is passing away" in v. 31.

* Circle "concern/ed" in vv. 32-34.

* Draw a line from "divided" in v. 34 to "undivided" in v. 35.

* Box "that" indicating *purpose* in v. 35.

* Highlight v. 35b.

day 2

EXPLORE – the answer to these questions to better understand what the passage means.

Consult the explanation of the message and the notes to follow if you need help.

1. What would you say is the *subject* of 1 Corinthians 7:25-35, i.e., what is Paul writing about?
2. Explain the *contrast* in verse 25.
3. What makes you think "the present crisis" *then* (v. 26) is "the present crisis" *now*? (Cf., vv. 29, 31)
4. Paul told unmarried men to remain single in verse 27. Did he consider his advice binding? Explain.
5. How do you know he intended unmarried women to follow the same advice?
6. Put the point of verses 29-31 in your own words.
7. In the words of the text, what's the primary difference between a married man and an unmarried man?
8. Is it the same with regard to a married woman and an unmarried woman?
9. Explain the *contrast* in verse 35.
10. **Discussion:** Talk about the *complement* of 1 Corinthians 7:25-34, i.e., what does Paul say about what he is writing about?

day 3

EXAMINE – an explanation of the message to better understand the meaning of the passage.

While the subject and gist of 1 Corinthians 7:25-35 is reasonably clear, the details have generated a lot of debate. As far as the subject and gist are concerned, the opening words of verse 25, "now about," indicate that the passage contains Paul's reply to another of the matters the Corinthians had written him about (see 7:1). While we cannot know for certain exactly what was going on in Corinth, it appears there were young women in the church who were either engaged or contemplating marriage; these "virgins" were being pressured to remain single by some in the church who considered themselves "spiritual" and celibacy more honorable than marriage. While Paul's use of the term "virgins" might suggest that the subject of the passage is *chastity*, in fact, the subject is marriage, more specifically whether an unmarried person ought to remain single or get married. And while the Corinthians asked specifically about young *unmarried women*, Paul's remarks clearly apply *directly* to young *unmarried men* as well (cf., vv. 27b, 32, 33) and perhaps *indirectly* to widows and widowers (cf., v. 34). Regarding the gist of the passage, since the Lord did not speak to the issue, Paul offered his judgment couched in the following sound pastoral advice: While remaining single and getting married are equally honorable personal choices, remaining single is preferable practically, especially in difficult times, because it facilitates living in undivided devotion to the Lord.

First, Paul recommends that individuals remain as they are (vv. 25-28), advising that staying single is preferable to getting married but not required. "Are you bound to a wife?" he asks. In other words, are you married or perhaps under obligation to a woman? "Do not seek to be free," he says. Put differently, don't seek a divorce or renege on your obligation. Speaking to the other side of the issue, he then asks, "Are you free from a wife?" In other words, are you unmarried? No doubt he had in mind men who had never married; perhaps he had divorcees and widowers in mind, too. "Do not seek a wife," he says. Having said that, he adds that neither men nor women who reject his advice have sinned. Paul isn't commanding obedience; he's offering wise counsel. Like any good pastor, he only wants to

spare his parishioners the troubles that married couples inevitably face. The decision to marry or not to marry is simply not a matter of right or wrong.

Then he details the advantages of staying single (vv. 29-35). The first advantage pertains to the fact that "time is short" (v. 29) and "this world in its present form is passing away" (v. 31). Perspective is everything. One commentator puts it this way: "Those who have a definite future and see it with clarity live in the present with radically altered values as to what counts and what does not. In that sense it calls for those who want to get married to rethink what that may mean, especially in light of the present distress" (Gordon D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, NICNT, 339). In other words, staying single may count more than getting married to the unmarried person with a biblical view of the future. What's more, that view will no doubt lead him, as well as one who is married, to live in radical ways when it comes to other things in this life—some of which Paul describes in verses 29-31. Taken *literally* his statements in these verses are absurdities. For example, "From now on those who have wives should live as if they had none" (v. 29; cf., vv. 2-6). Taken *rhetorically* they make better sense by warning against becoming engrossed in the things of this passing-away world. The commentator above explains, "One does not so much live 'detached' from the world (after all, Paul expects the Corinthians to continue doing all five of these things) as totally free from its control. Therefore, one lives in the world just as the rest—married, sorrowing, rejoicing, buying, making use of it—but none of these determines one's life. The Christian is marked by eternity; therefore, he or she is not under the dominating power of those things that dictate the existence of others" (341).

The second advantage pertains to the fact that the interests of married men, as well as married women, are divided (v. 34). Married men and women have their minds on the affairs of this world in general and on how to please their spouses in particular (vv. 33, 34b). Unmarried men and women, on the other hand, have their minds on the Lord's affairs in general and how to please him in particular (vv. 32, 34a). It's not that these concerns are mutually

exclusive. Unmarried men and women have their minds on the affairs of this world, too, just as married men have their minds on the Lord's affairs, too. It's just that the interests of married men and women are divided (v. 34a) to an extent and in ways that the interests of unmarried men and women are not. Needless to say, singles face personal challenges in life, but they don't face the *additional* family challenges that married couples

face. These additional challenges cannot and must not be ignored; consequently, all other things being equal, married couples don't have the bandwidth available to them to pursue the Lord's affairs that singles do. Having said that, Paul assures his readers that his goal in advising the unmarried to remain unmarried is not to restrict them, i.e., prevent them from getting married, but to free them to live "in undivided devotion to the Lord."

The Message of the Passage

While remaining single and getting married are equally honorable personal choices, remaining single is preferable practically, especially in difficult times, because it facilitates living in undivided devotion to the Lord.

day **4** **EMBRACE** – how God spoke to you in his word.

Our desire is to not be merely hearers of the word, but doers of the word as James suggests in James 1:22. Try some of the challenges below to apply what you have learned this week.

- **Journal your thoughts on the passage:**

- Write about what God wants you to know . . .

- Write about how God wants you to feel . . .

- Write about what God wants you to do . . .

“Good to Great Singleness”

(Use the space below for Sunday's message notes)

notes STUDY – the commentaries to answer the questions.

v. 25 **Virgins** Cf., "the betrothed" (ESV); "young women who are not yet married" (NLT); "unmarried people" (GNT); "people who have never married" (NET). "There are three main views as to which group of people is referred to by the word (*parthenos*) . . . (1) The term could refer to virgin women who were not married. The central issue would then be whether or not their fathers should give them in marriage to eligible men. (This is the view which has been widely held throughout the history of the Church.) (2) A minority understand the term to refer to men and women who are married but who have chosen to live together without sexual relations. This position might have been possible in the Corinthian church, but there is no solid evidence to support it. (3) The view adopted by many modern commentators (see, e.g., Fee, Conzelmann, Barrett) is that the term refers to young, engaged women who were under the influence of various groups within the Corinthian church not to go through with their marriages. The central issue would then be whether the young men and women should continue with their plans and finalize their marriages. For further discussion, see G. D. Fee, *First Corinthians* (NICNT), 325-28" (the NET Bible, 19th ed. on 1Co 7:25). The third view "has the distinct advantage of seeing both vv. 27-28 and 36-38 as being addressed to the same man, without the need of changing either topics or persons addressed" (Fee, 327; cf., Thomas L. Constable, "Notes on 1 Corinthians," 2013 ed., 84, www.soniclight.com).

v. 25 **Now about** Cf., v. 1. Paul is responding to a question the Corinthians had asked in a letter to him. "Beginning in chapter 7, Paul addressed himself to certain questions (introduced by the phrase *peri de*, 'now concerning') about marital issues (7:1, 25), liberty and responsibility (8:1), spiritual gifts and church order (12:1), money for impoverished saints in Jerusalem (16:1), and the availability of Apollos (16:12)" (David K. Lowery, "1 Corinthians," *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: New Testament*, 506).

v. 25 **no command** "The Lord Jesus had not addressed this problem during His earthly ministry as far as Paul knew (cf. v. 12). Paul gave his inspired opinion as a trustworthy (wise) steward of the Lord who had received mercy to be such (4:2). Note that Paul appealed to the Lord's mercy, not His command. As in the first part of this chapter, Paul was offering good advice, but he was not commanding that everyone do the same thing. Thus to choose not to follow Paul's advice did not amount to sinning" (Constable, 85, www.soniclight.com).

v. 26 **present crisis** "What is the present distress or crisis (Gr. *anagke*) to which the apostle referred? It may have been a crisis in the Corinthian church or in Corinth, about which we have no more specific information. However in view of Paul's description of this distress (vv. 29-31) it seems as though he was speaking of the fact that we live in the last days . . . If this is correct, we live in the same present distress as the Corinthian believers did. It is a time of distress because of the hostility of unbelievers and increasing apostasy (cf. 1 Tim. 4; 2 Tim. 3)" (85).

v. 26 **you** Lit., "a man" (NASB); cf., "a person" (ESV). The Gk. *anthropos* [man] "without the article means man generically—i.e., both men and women as the illustrations of vv. 27, 28 show" (W. Harold Mare, "1 Corinthians," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, 10:236).

v. 27 **married; seek a divorce** Cf., "bound to a wife;" "seek to be free" (ESV). "Free" is lit. "loosed," which is a technical term in the papyri for discharging someone from the obligations of a contract. "If it means that here, then he is speaking first to the betrothed (the 'virgins'): 'Are you bound (= under obligation to) a woman? Then do not seek to break off the obligation.' The second question would then expand the point to include all singles: 'Are you free from such obligations? Do not seek a wife' . . . [the Gk. term *gune* can refer to a woman] to whom one is engaged and a 'wife' that one is encouraged not to seek" (Fee, 331, 32).

v. 27 **unmarried; look for a wife** Cf., "free from a wife," "seek a wife" (ESV).

v. 28 **you** Here "you," the young man, in contrast to "the virgin," the young woman.

v. 29 **time is short** Cf., v. 31b. Paul was probably not referring to the brevity of life but to the fact that time is running out and the end of this world as we know it is drawing near. He argues this way: "In light of the imminent *Parousia* [return of Christ], to marry is to add additional troubles in the present age that is soon to pass away, so why marry? One commentator gives the expression a slightly different nuance. "Paul's concern, therefore, is not with the amount of time they have left, but with the radical new perspective the 'foreshortened future' gives one with regard to the present age" (Fee, 339).

v. 32 **concerned** "The unmarried either 'care for' the things of the Lord (which is good) or are 'anxious about' such things (which is bad); so also the married, who either 'care for' or are 'anxious about' their spouses. The specific difference between them is that the married are also divided, that is they have the additional concern of the spouse" (Fee, 337).

v. 35 **not to restrict** Lit., "not to put a noose on you."

Family Talk

Encouragement from one parent's heart to another

Guest Writer: Dawne McElroy

Special note to parents: From April 7 to May 26, your children will be learning about families in the Old Testament in our series, "Family Road Trip." During this series we will be on a journey to discover important biblical principles we can apply to our families today. Please note that the scriptures kids will be studying are different than the ones in the adult *Scrolls*. Next Sunday we are studying the story of Jacob and Esau from Genesis 27:1-40. God knew, before he created the world, what his plan was for Jacob's life. But this family strayed from God's plan. Even so, in the end, God's plan worked out and Isaac accepted that God was working in his family's lives.

The more we learn about what God wants from us the more we are able to make godly choices. Without his guidance a choice can interfere with God's plan but he will bring the results of those choices under his control. Of course, life works out better when we are seeking God before making choices!

Consider a lock & a key, or a nutcracker and a pecan, or even a can and a can opener. These objects work together for a common purpose. When we believe in Jesus Christ and learn God's word we come closer to God's purpose. Life without God is like a padlock with no key or a can with no can opener or a nutcracker with no nut! Be encouraged! God has got this! Trust God's plan, and keep pointing to Jesus!

What Does The Bible Say

Weekly Verse: Genesis 27:1-40

1. Did God tell Isaac to give his son the blessing or that he was going to die soon? Was Isaac listening to God?
2. What did Isaac tell Esau to do and why? (v. 4)
3. What did Rebekah tell Jacob to put on his hands and neck? (vv.14-16) Why? (v. 11)

What Do You Think

- A. Read Genesis 25:21-23. In these verses, who did God say would serve who?
- B. Was God's will done in our story of Isaac's blessing?
- C. What should we do to understand God's will for our daily life?

What R U Going To Do

Start a 15 minute daily Bible reading plan. There are lots of plans on the internet. Make a calendar and check off each day's reading and display it somewhere to remind you how well you're doing! GOING FURTHER: Make at least one note of something important that was in your daily reading. Keep your notes in a journal.

MEMORY TIME

Core Comp

Single-mindedness - I pay attention to the important things God has for my life

Memory Verse

Psalm 33:11 – "But the plans of the LORD stand firm forever, the purposes of his heart through all generations."

KIDPIX COUPON

I memorized CC ____ and Verse _____. Family completed **Say** _____ **Think** _____ **Do** _____

Child's name _____ Grade ____ Parent's signature _____

Earn tokens by completing the Bible study portion of this page.
Questions: Kids@pantego.org

30 CORE COMPETENCIES

10 CORE BELIEFS

Trinity 2 Corinthians 13:14

I believe the God of the Bible is the only true God - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Salvation By Grace Ephesians 2:8-9

I believe a person comes into a right relationship with God by His grace, through faith in Jesus Christ.

Authority of the Bible 2 Timothy 3:16-17

I believe the Bible is the Word of God and has the right to command my belief and action.

Personal God Psalm 121:1-2

I believe God is involved in and cares about my daily life.

Identity in Christ John 1:12

I believe I am significant because of my position as a child of God.

Church Ephesians 4:15-16

I believe the church is God's primary way to accomplish His purposes on earth today.

Humanity John 3:16

I believe all people are loved by God and need Jesus Christ as their Savior.

Compassion Psalm 82:3-4

I believe God calls all Christians to show compassion to those in need.

Eternity John 14:1-4

I believe there is a heaven and a hell and that Jesus Christ is returning to judge the earth and to establish His eternal kingdom.

Stewardship 1 Timothy 6:17-19

I believe that everything I am or own belongs to God.

10 CORE PRACTICES

Worship Psalm 95:1-7

I worship God for who He is and what He has done for me.

Prayer Psalm 66:16-20

I pray to God to know Him, to lay my request before Him and to find direction for my daily life.

Bible Study Hebrews 4:12

I read the Bible to know God, the truth, and to find direction for my daily life.

Single-mindedness Matthew 6:33

I focus on God and His priorities for my life.

Spiritual Gifts Romans 12:4-6

I know and use my spiritual gifts to accomplish God's purposes.

Biblical Community Acts 2:44-47

I fellowship with other Christians to accomplish God's purposes in my life, others' lives, and in the world.

Giving Away My Time Colossians 3:17

I give away my time to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Money

2 Corinthians 8:7

I give away my money to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Faith Ephesians

6:19-20

I give away my faith to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Life Romans 12:1

I give away my life to fulfill God's purposes.

10 CORE VIRTUES

Joy John 15:11

I have inner contentment and purpose in spite of my circumstances.

Peace Philippians 4:6-7

I am free from anxiety because things are right between God, myself, and others.

Faithfulness Proverbs 3:3-4

I have established a good name with God and with others based on my long-term loyalty to those relationships.

Self-Control Titus 2:11-13

I have the power, through Christ, to control myself.

Humility Philippians 2:3, 4

I choose to esteem others above myself.

Love 1 John 4:10-12

I sacrificially and unconditionally love and forgive others.

Patience Proverbs 14:29

I take a long time to overheat and endure patiently under the unavoidable pressures of life.

Kindness/Goodness 1 Thess. 5:15

I choose to do the right things in my relationships with others.

Gentleness Philippians 4:5

I am thoughtful, considerate and calm in dealing with others.

Hope Hebrews 6:19-20

I can cope with the hardships of life and with death because of the hope I have in Jesus Christ.

About the Authors

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Wendy Hollabaugh (B.S.W. University of Texas at Arlington) is the Children's Minister at Pantego Bible Church. Wendy has over ten years of experience in Children's Ministry. She has a passion for leading families to connect with God and each other. She enjoys creating compelling environments where kids fall in love with God and His Truth. Wendy and her husband, Greg, are also involved in their own personal youth ministry as they are training their three teenagers, Hannah, Aaron and Noah.



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The mission of THE SCROLLS is to help you develop the beliefs, practices, and virtues of a follower of Jesus Christ called The 30 Core Competencies through your own active reading of the Bible. Send any questions or comments you may have about this lesson to Tom Bulick. His e-mail address is tbulick@pantego.org.