



So, What if You're Single | Pastor Brad Williams | March 7, 2010

A. Fellowship Time (10-15 minutes)

1. Chitchat. Perhaps offer coffee, tea, or a cold drink with some snacks.
2. Pray (or invite someone to pray) to open the discussion.

B. Review Time (Read the summary below to the group: 5-10 minutes)

Introduction: Relationships between men and women aren't easy, which is why we've spent the last several weeks answering questions to help build a right relationship with the opposite sex. But there's one question we haven't answered. What if you're single? Everything in our culture tells us that being in relationship with someone is what will make us happy; it's what we're supposed to do, it's what, in the words of Jerry Maguire, "completes us." But what if this is wrong? What if this isn't the way it's supposed to be? If this is wrong, if this is a broken way of thinking, and you're single waiting for the right person, then this changes things. And if you're married, then this might explain some of your disappointments, some of your frustrations in your marriage. Today we're going to unpack a principle. If you're single or if you're married, it's a principle that will absolutely revolutionize the way you think about your life.

Paul begins in **1 Corinthians 7:1-2** by saying, "Now for the matters you wrote about: It is good for a man not to marry. But since there is so much immorality, each man should have his own wife and each woman her own husband." He continues in **verse 6** by saying, "I say this as a concession, not as a command." Paul is saying that it is better to avoid marriage, but understanding our culture, understanding the immorality of the world you're living in, it's a concession. If you have to get married to avoid sexual immorality, then go ahead and get married. His primary concern is purity; he wants us to be holy. Why would God put such an emphasis on staying single? It is a heart issue, the human heart is like a little idol factory. Internal idol worship within the heart is universal. In **Ezekiel 14:3**, God made an observation about man when He said, "these men have set up idols in their hearts." God was basically saying that the human heart takes good things, like a successful career, love, material possessions, even family, and turns them into ultimate things. Our hearts put these things at the center of our lives because we think they can give us significance and security, safety and fulfillment, if we could just get them. An idol is anything more important to you than God, anything that absorbs your heart and imagination more than God does. It can be family and children, career and making money or it can even be a romantic relationship.

1. Principle: Relationships and sex can easily become idols.

Relationships, this idea of being with another person, and sexuality, can easily become an idol in your life that you worship. We can do it with all kinds of things, it can be money, it can be power, it can be success, but it can very easily be that relationship, that if you just found the right guy, or if you just found that woman, it would make you complete. That's idolatry. And it doesn't matter if you're married or single, if you depend on a relationship with another person for significance, or for purpose, or for meaning in your life, then you've turned that relationship into an ultimate thing. You've turned it into an idol. And that's why Paul puts such an emphasis on singleness, because he knows the human heart. He knows how easily we can make relationships an idol.

2. Principle: Singleness is a gift.

Paul writes in **1 Corinthians 7:7**, "I wish that all men were as I am." (He was single and never married.) "But each man has his own gift from God; one has this gift, another has that." Paul is breaking new ground with this statement. For the Jewish people, the idea was for them to be fruitful and multiply. Singleness was a curse. It was bad. But Paul makes a statement that singleness isn't a curse, singleness is a gift. Paul is saying it is GOOD for man to stay unmarried. Why? He explains in **1 Corinthians 7:28** "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." Marriage takes work and it takes effort. There are troubles

associated with marriage. Anybody that's been married more than three weeks can tell you that. Paul understood that marriage impacts a person's focus and freedom. He put it this way, *"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. But a married man is concerned about the affairs of this world—how he can please his wife—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. 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."* See, what he's saying is the gift of singleness invites us to be fully devoted to Jesus. When we are single, we have opportunities that married people don't, because a married person's responsibilities and devotion are divided. But when we are single, we can be fully devoted to the Lord.

3. Principle: The only person that can complete us is Jesus Christ.

The only person that can make us feel whole, the only person that can satisfy our longing for fulfillment, the only person that can complete us, is Jesus Christ. There's no Mr. Right who is right enough. There's no perfect 10 who's ten enough, to satisfy the deeper longings of our hearts. And a single person has the opportunity and the privilege to pursue that wholeheartedly – full time. What a gift. We know that deep down, we might think another human being can complete us, but a relationship with another person will never satisfy the way that Jesus Christ does. And married people, we have to figure out, that if we build our life around our spouse, as wonderful as they may be; if we find our identity in them, as much as they love God, we will never fill the space in our heart that is reserved for Jesus. We've been hardwired to find identity, to find fulfillment in Him, not another broken human being. God created us uniquely and strange as it may seem, he created us single. We came into this world single, and we will spend eternity single. Marriage, for those of us who are married, is only a temporary state. But if you're single, you've been given a gift. So, make the most of it. You're not in a holding pattern, you're free to pursue the life God wants for you. You don't need another person to make you whole. Jesus makes you whole.

C. Life Group Questions (select, revise, and add as desired: 20-40 minutes)

1. What does our culture tell us about relationships, being single and getting married? Read 1 Corinthians 7:1-3. Why does Paul write that it is better to stay unmarried?
2. What is an idol? Have you ever made someone or something an idol? What was it? How can relationships become idols? What could you do to prevent your relationships becoming idols?
3. How do you look at singleness? Is it a gift or a curse to you? What makes you think of singleness this way? What is the value of being single? Read 1 Corinthians 7:32-34. What is a married person worried about? What is an unmarried person worried about?
4. Who is the one person who can complete you? If you are single, how are you pursuing the one relationship that can complete you? Where do you find your identity or your worth? Where should you find your identity or your worth?

D. Personal Application (1-3 Minutes)

- If you are single, enjoy the gift of being single. Reflect on your life in comparison to the life that Paul writes about. Reflect on your life and the importance you place on your relationship with God and the people and things in your life. Make an intentional decision to make your relationship with God first in your life.
- If you are married, take a personal inventory; determine where you find your identity. Think about the frustrations and disappointments you have with your spouse. Determine if they are coming from your attempts to fill the God shaped hole in your life with something other than Jesus.

E. Prayer Time (As a whole group or subgroups of 3-4; 10-15 Minutes)

- Thank God for the blessings in your life—your relationship with Him and with others.
- Ask the Lord to help you make Him the ultimate priority in your life, whether single or married.
- Ask God to help you put Him first in your life and keep Him your #1 priority.