

Small Groups @ TBC Sermon Discussion Notes

Date of Sermon: October 14th 2018

Speaker: David Lawrence

Title: Marriage & Singleness

Introduction: In this passage Paul answers the Corinthian's questions about marriage, singleness and sex. This discussion guide breaks the chapters up into sections to reflect on. (Leader: one idea for this session might be to split the group up into 2's or 3's and give them a section each to think about, before discussing with the whole group).

Review: Invite one or more who have heard the talk to give their own brief review.

1. Read: 1 Corinthians 7:1-7 - Advice for married couples: maintain sexual relationships

Reflect :

- The fact that the married couples in Corinth had asked Paul for advice about their sex-lives reveals how deeply they had understood the truth that the Gospel affects every part of our lives. Are there areas of our lives today which new converts (or older Christians) might think are of no interest to God?
- There is a strong mutuality between husband and wife in this section (v2, v4, 5a), which would have been shocking to Paul's first hearers (they assumed the man was in charge!). Is there anything in this passage that would be shocking to modern readers?

2. Read: 1 Corinthians 7:8-9 - Advice for widowers and widows: stay unmarried

Reflect :

- Note: 'unmarried' (v8), refers to widowers.
- Why do you think Paul advised the widows and widowers to remain unmarried, if possible? Are there any clues in verses 32-35?

3. Read: 1 Corinthians 7:8-10 - Advice for Christian married couples: no divorce

Reflect :

- There are no discussion questions for this section, but note that Paul here refers to teaching that Jesus gave on divorce (verse 10) - see Matthew 19:3-12. (For a more rounded view of the Bible and Divorce point people to the talk that David gave on 12 June 2016 which is in the archive section of Podcasts on our church website- his PPT slides are also on the website).

Leaders: feel free to be selective and creative with your use of these notes.

Don't feel you have to use all of the material, but
do try to keep the shape of Review – Read – Reflect – Respond
and **DO make room for the 'And Finally' questions!**

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4. Read: 1 Corinthians 7:12-16 - Advice For Christians married to unbelievers: stay in the marriage.

Reflect :

- How would you summarise Paul's advice here?
- What reasons does he give for the believing partner to remain in the marriage (14,16)?
- Paul majors on the potential of staying in the relationship (16). How should the believing partner behave if this potential is to be fulfilled? (Are there clues in 1 Peter 3:1-7?).
- What are the challenges of living in a divided household? How can the church support people in this position?

5. Read: 1 Corinthians 7:25-38 - Advice For Engaged Couples: Remain as You Are.

Reflect :

- (Note: "the virgins" (v25) probably indicates engaged couples.)
- What reasons does Paul give for choosing singleness over following through with their marriage in these verses? In what way do any of these hold good today?
- Paul values the single life over marriage here.
 - What are the benefits of the single life?
 - What are the challenges of the single life?
 - How could the church be a good place for single people to be? Try to come up with 'Five Values for a Single-Friendly Church'. (Feel free to pass your thoughts on to the elders if you want to!).

Throughout this passage Paul has given clear advice to the different groups at Corinth, but left the door open for them to choose a different path with no shame or guilt (see for example: v9; 11; 15; 28; 38).

- What kind of view of God's guidance does this give us?
- David used three images for different ways of thinking about God's guidance in his talk. Which do the group find to be most consistent with Paul's teaching in this chapter?
 - the narrow mountain ridge - where we must find the one safe path and walk it for fear of falling away from God's 'best' for us.
 - the wide open moorland - where we can go wherever we want to, with no fear of confronting boundaries or 'no-entry' signs.
 - the walled garden - where we can live freely within the boundaries described by the walls.

And finally:

As you conclude, ask each person:

- What is the main thing you are taking away as an action point?
- How can we pray for you?
- Is there anything we can check on next time we meet?

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