

“God’s Plan in Singleness” // Matthew 19:3–12; Mark 3:31–35 // Forever Family 2.y

Open your Bibles to Matt 19...

Last weekend we began a series on marriage, and I know some of you eagerly brought back your spouse to church this week excited for me to tell them everything you’ve been trying to tell them for years. Or maybe you came ready to get some good instructions on dating.

Branden Williams, our music director, had the **best response** I’ve heard to the start of this series: **He got engaged (2 pics)**!

Even if you’re **not looking to pop the question anytime soon** there is going to be a lot of great stuff in here about relationships in general: marriage, dating, conflict resolution, and even parenting.

In fact, for all you PARENTS I’ve got something really exciting to tell you. Many of you know the name **Paul David Tripp**. The man, the mystery, the mustache.

- **Well in just one month**, we are hosting PDT here for his **national parenting conference** and I want **to tell you** that you don’t want to miss it.

Works Consulted:

“Singleness: Myth Busting,” Lori Frances
Confronting Christianity, Rebecca McLaughlin
“Singleness (Matthew 19:12),” Jon Tyson
Seven Myths About Singleness, Sam Allberry
“Finding the One,” Craig Groeschel
“Singleness,” David Platt

- On **March 6 and 7**, at the Capital Hills Campus, **PDT** will explain how parenting, with all its exhaustion, discouragement, frustration (**Can I get an Amen, parents?**) can beam with gospel hope.
- **And that will show you how that changes** your approach to your kids.
- **There w/b a session specifically for the teen years**, “There is a session specifically for the teen years.” “It’s called WTH.” “It’s actually called ‘the North Korean Years: when they are smart enough to make nuclear bombs but not mature enough to handle them.’” No, just kidding, that’s not it either. But there will be one.
- but parents in every stage of life will receive a roadmap for rearing children from infancy until adulthood.
- There are still a few tickets left to attend and you can get those at summitchurch.com/events.
 - BTW, this conference will be streaming to churches all around the country, and we get to be the host church, which means one more thing: we need volunteers to help us host it well. Listen to this, if you volunteer you will not only help us host the conference well, but you will also get streaming access to his **Marriage Conference as well**.
 - Again, for all info on attending and serving, go to summitchurch.com/events.

OK, like I said, **some of you came today hoping** I’d tell your spouse everything you’ve been trying to tell them—but Veronica didn’t finish writing that sermon yet. So we’ll get to that eventually, but today we’re going to talk about singleness.

YOU SAY: Why start with singleness? Well first, about 6000 of you listening to me this weekend are single. **That's right**, there are 6000 single people in our church!

Let's see:

- **How many of you are married?** Raise your hand up, raise it up high.
- **How many of you are not married?** Raise them up, up high.
- **How many of you are single and would really be open to meeting *the one* sometime soon?** Raise them up high. OK, take a minute and see who else's hands are raised. Just kidding.
- **How about this one: How many of you met and married the one, but now after a few years, you'd like to trade in the one for another one?** Raise... Just kidding! **Do not raise your hand. Do not!** God bless you, I see that hand. I'll pray for you.

Did you know: This generation in American history will remain single longer than any other generation?

- The **average age** for a first marriage in America is about 30 yrs old for men and for women 28, which is the highest it's ever been.
- **By the time today's young people reach 50 years of age**, 1 of 4 would have been single all their life.

My family and I at one point had a **college girl from the TSC** living with us, and she told us that it can be tough to be single at a church like Summit. First, she said, everybody's always pressuring you to get married.

- Second, she said, **when you notice someone in church** you think was checking you out, and you were kind of checking them out, too, all of the sudden you become really self-conscious about everything.
 - **LIKE:** How should you worship? Do you go full-on Pentecostal, washing heaven's windows--or will that be too much?
 - Maybe you should go with the subtle, I-just-wanna- receive-from-the-Lord **charismatic**?

- And you **gotta make sure when the sermon starts** that you reach for an actual paper Bible to show you're not theologically shallow, because if you pull up the Bible on your phone there's no way you take your Bible study that seriously. *Yeah, I said it. **Yeah, yeah, that's preaching time right there.***
- And then, at the end, do you come forward for prayer—is that going to communicate you are broken and humble or does that just make them think you might have some issues they don't want to touch?
- Or **maybe the best move** is go up and pretend like you're on the prayer team because that shows you are spiritually mature.
- **So much pressure!**

So, anyway... **the first reason** I am starting with singleness is that we have so many singles at this church.

More importantly, though, Jesus' whole approach to marriage is grounded in a concept that redefines not only marriage but singleness, too.

Which is **why in Matthew 19 Jesus' weaves into his answer on divorce a teaching about singleness!**

After explaining that marriage is beautiful, but also so hard that if you're going to make it you need God's help, **he says: 12 For** (but there are also) there are eunuchs (those without normal reproductive organs) who have been so from birth (scholars say all 3 of these categories could be taken analogously: from birth: they were born intersex or without normal sexual desire), and there are eunuchs who have been made eunuchs by men (they might have liked to be married, but for whatever reason the circumstances of life have just not set them up for marriage--they haven't met the right one; it's not the right time); and there are eunuchs who have made themselves eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of heaven. (those who **choose to**

remain unmarried for the purpose of something God has called them to¹) **Let the one who is able to receive this receive it.**"

- Commentators say that these **3 descriptions of eunuchs serve as analogies for singleness**:

Here's what was radical: In bringing this up, everybody knew he was referencing **Isaiah 56**—a beautiful OT passage in which eunuchs are promised in the coming of the Messiah an inheritance better than sons and daughters.

- **You see, in Isaiah's day,** singles were considered to be missing an essential part of life.
 - **Not only** were they without a life partner, they were **unable to have kids**, and kids guaranteed your inheritance in the people of God.
 - Many regarded eunuchs to be cursed.
- **Isaiah 56 prophecies** that in the coming kingdom of the Messiah, the eunuch will be blessed right alongside the married because in the Messiah he will be given an eternal inheritance independent of children or family. He may lack physical family he is woven into God's forever family
- **In the Messiah,** any curse is removed and singleness is no longer a stigma.

I want to use this idea to deal with a **deeply held myth in our culture**--one not only believed in our culture, but sadly one that we promote in our churches sometimes also.

It's **the "marriage = completion" myth.** *It assumes that marriage and a nuclear family is some kind of ultimate state for mankind: and thus if you don't find that special someone to spend your life with, you have **missed out on the essential part** of a full and happy life.*

You can hear that in the church how we try to encourage/console singles:

- *"Don't worry... **you'll get married someday.**"*
 - **As if to say,** "Poor you, I know it's hard to be missing such an essential part of life."
 - Bruce Ashford, one of our elders, was single for a while here and he said every time he was at a wedding these sweet little old ladies...I told him he had a hateful spirit and needed prayer
- *Or sometimes we tell singles, "**God just has to do a little bit of work on you before he brings you that special someone.** You have to **become someone special** before God can give you someone special."*
 - And the single person thinks: *I'm not special or lovable yet?*
 - *That's not to mention the truly dysfunctional people I see who get married.* And I think, "If God gave marriage as a reward to those who had become special and lovable, he got the wrong address." Amen?
- A lot of churches treat their singles ministries as little more than sanctified substitutes for singles bars... I know of one church that called its **adult social group, 'Pairs and Spares.'**² So the single people are the **spares?**
- The assumption is that marriage is the only way to live a full and happy life.

Now, **many of us in here can laugh** about stories like that. But this **myth leads to a lot of confusion and pain.** And Jesus, who was single himself, taught explicitly against it. So strongly, in fact, that if you didn't know better, you'd be tempted to think he was dissing marriage.

Not just here in Matthew 19, but several places. Let me **take you on a little Gospel tour for a few minutes**--you can stay there in Matthew, because I'm coming back there.

¹ Barry Danylak, *Redeeming Your Singleness*

² Rodney Clapp, *Families at the Crossroads*, 89.

But let's head over to: Mark 3:31–35 [31] And his mother and his brothers came, and standing outside they... called him. [32] And a crowd was sitting around him, and they said to him, "Your mother and your brothers are outside, seeking you." [33] And he answered them, "Who are my mother and my brothers?"** (Mary a perpetual virgin) [34] And looking about at those who sat around him, he said, "Here are my mother and my brothers! [35] For whoever does the will of God, he is my brother and sister and mother."

- **What is going on here?** Did Jesus not love his mother and brothers? Did he not identify with them?
- **Of course he did. But he was using this opportunity** to teach something very important: **He had a family more important** than even his biological one.
- **In his death and resurrection he was creating a forever family** that would trump even the bonds of biology.
- **RADICAL: The nuclear family is not the center of God's Kingdom.** **The family** unit may be the building block of our society (and it **should be--God ordered it that way**), **but it is not the center** of God's kingdom.
- (This is not to say it's not important; just that it's **not ultimate** in the KoG).

Luke 11:27 As Jesus was saying these things, a woman in the crowd called out, "Blessed is the womb that bore you, and the breasts at which you nursed!" (Listen, I'm **into people talking back to me** while I preach--"preach it, preacher," and so forth--but **that has to be one of the weirdest** things ever said to someone while preaching: Blessed are the breasts at which you nursed!) Jesus turned and said ("Gross." No, he says), "Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and keep it!"

- **Take a minute to let that sink in.**
- Someone said, "Jesus, how great it must be to be related to you!" And Jesus said, "**Nope. Those who obey the word of God are**

more blessed and precious to Jesus than even my own biological mother!

- **Think about it: How awesome would it be to have Jesus in your ancestry tree?** I'd be working that into any conversation I could. My uncle, who is Jesus, you know, once told me...
- Anyone who knows me at all knows that if you give me half a chance I'll tell you that my great, great, great, great, great Uncle was Davy Crockett. If you bring up Tennessee, Texas, or the 19th century, I'll find a way to slip that into conversation. But **how cool would it be** to be related to Jesus?
- Jesus says, 'Being my brother? My mom? Not that big of a deal. Being **united to me by baptism** and have my Spirit dwelling in you? **Huge deal.**"
- **Christopher Yuan--a Christian author** I really respect who writes a lot about same sex attraction, and is single, says: "Our earthly families are temporarily bound by blood, but the family of God is eternally bound by the blood of the lamb."

Mark 12:18 And the Sadducees, who say that there is no resurrection, asked him a question, [19] "Teacher, Moses wrote for us that if a man's brother dies and leaves a wife, but leaves no child, the man must take the widow and raise up offspring for his brother. [20] There were seven brothers; the first took a wife, and when he died left no offspring. [21] And the second took her, and died, leaving no offspring. And the third likewise. [22] And the seven left no offspring. Last of all the woman also died. [23] In the resurrection, when they rise again, whose wife will she be? For the seven had her as wife." *I know, this sounds like the prologue to a Mormon joke...* [24] Jesus said to them, "You are wrong, knowing neither the Scriptures nor the power of God. [25] For when they rise from the dead, they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven.

- Jesus' answer, simply—**in heaven, marriage and the nuclear family do not exist.**
- We saw last week that, according to Jesus, in the **Garden of Eden**, marriage was God's plan-A for dealing with our loneliness.

- But **in heaven, there will be no marriage** or biological family.
- **That's not to say** we will have lost our need for companionship or that it is then ok to be alone; it's that God will deal with our aloneness in a new and better way.
- Marriage will **no longer be his plan-A** for dealing with loneliness; **and so, whomever** we're married to down here, we won't be married to them up there. We won't be married at all.
 - **I'll admit: Part of me finds this a little sad.** In heaven, when I see Veronica, there's not going to be anything? Will I give at least her a wink and a suggestive nod?
 - You say, "Well, this **makes me sad, too.**"
- But there's **no sadness, of course, in heaven**, and that's because in heaven, you see, our joys are not diminished at all; they are heightened. Transformed. Matured.
 - **C.S. Lewis** in his book *Miracles* had a great example for this. **A toddler thinks** the single greatest thing in life is get candy. So imagine you are a grandmother trying to explain to your **toddler-granddaughter** some of the things you most loved about life: Falling in love and starting a family. Staring out over the Grand Canyon. Watching your kids graduate. The joy of a good book. And your toddler granddaughter says, "*Yeah, but can you eat Skittles while you do these things?*"
 - **You have a hard time explaining that these pleasures are so much better** than eating candy; so much so that when you're wrapped up in them you won't even think about eating candy.
 - **Lewis said that we, like that child,** lack the ability to understand the joys of eternity. We know now the **pleasures of earthly things** like sex, married life and nuclear family; "**We do not know, except in glimpses, the other thing which, in Heaven, will leave no room for them.**"³

³ C.S. Lewis, *Miracles*

⁴ "Heaven will be the best of both worlds. We'll have the single person's ability to focus 100% of all of our resources on God AND we, the church, will have all of the goodness of THE greatest marriage in the world as we, the bride of Christ, will

- **So whatever God has for us** there will be even better than what we have here.
- And that means whatever it is like up there, I'll be even closer to my wife and kids there than I am here. Which **makes me less sad.**⁴

The point: Jesus asserts the radical idea that marriage is not ultimate. And that's **proven by the fact** we don't take it with us in the resurrection.

- *****And that means these relationships now--mothers and brothers or wife or father-- are only temporary.**
- The relationships you form in the body of Christ, however, are **permanent**.

John Piper: Jesus was here calling out a new family where single people in Christ (or people not in traditional families) are full-fledged family members on a par with all others, bearing fruit for God and becoming mothers and fathers of the eternal kind. Marriage is temporary; and it will finally give way to the relationship to which it was pointing all along: Christ and the church—the way a picture is no longer needed when you see face to face."⁵

Let's go on to Paul in 1 Cor 7:29 The appointed time (of Christ's return) has grown very short. From now on, let those who have wives live as though they had none... That's a great verse. 'Let those with wives live as though they had none'? **Seems like the mantra of those** going to spend a weekend in Vegas. **But no. 30** For the present form of this world is passing away.

- **This world is passing away**, Paul says, and along with it marriage and biological families.

finally be with our groom forever. Heaven is both, the best of the gift of singleness AND the best of the gift of marriage so put your hope there." Christopher Yuan

⁵ <http://www.desiringgod.org/resource-library/sermons/single-in-christ-a-name-better-than-sons-and-daughters>

- So, for a married man to live as though he had no wife means to **reflect on the fact** that your marriage now is neither permanent nor ultimate.
- And **those of you who are single**, he is saying, should **reflect on** the fact that your situation is **not permanent either**.
- **Both situations—marriage and singleness—are light and momentary**, and soon they will give way to what is permanent and **ultimate**: the body of Christ.

Marriage and singleness, Paul says, are temporary gifts that God gives to fulfill his purposes on earth *in this age*, but not the next one.

1 Cor 7:7 Paul says, (Regarding marriage) I wish that all were as I myself am. (What was Paul? Single) But each has his own gift (charismata) from God (spiritual empowerment), one of one kind and one of another.

- **As we saw last week, both marriage and singleness are charismata--gifts.** You need spiritual empowerment to do either well.
- You say, **“Well, I get how marriage can be a gift, but *how can singleness* be a gift?”**
- Paul explains in vs. **33** The married man is anxious about worldly things, how to please his wife, 34 and his interests are divided. “As a single,” Paul says, “I have been freed up to devote time to **special assignments** that I couldn’t if I were married.”
 - **My wife was a wonderful gift to me, but when I got married, my interests became divided.** They had to be! God gave me people to serve; people whose needs I become responsible for.
 - **I had new responsibilities with my money:**
 - Before I got married, **to move** it took me a Ford Mustang, a few bungee cords and 15 minutes. Now, to move, it would take a **full-size SUV just to haul the pillows** that sit

on top of my bed. It would take **another load** to haul all the toiletry products Veronica stocks in our bathroom. I look around in our bathroom and wonder what all the stuff is. Who knew there were so many different kinds of soaps? **My bathroom used to have just one bar of soap in it**, and I cleaned everything with it—my face, my hair, the floors.

- **New responsibilities with my time:** I am not able to go on all the **mission trips I want to go on** anymore. **One of our singles** here was telling me about the most amazing ministry they have been doing, hanging out with a group of Muslim refugees until 10 on multiple nights of the week. I can’t do that anymore. I’ve got to run people to soccer practice, help do homework, help get ready for bed. So, I’m guzzling 5-hour energy drinks on the way home from work because I know my real work is about to start.
- **One married friend said: When you get married** and particularly when you have children, whatever pockets of margin you have just disappear into black holes of obligation.⁶
- Singleness **can be a gift that allows you** to be more devoted to God’s kingdom.
- And he might **give you that gift temporarily** so that you can complete some assignment (like your education or a military assignment) or for a lifetime.

You say, “But I don’t want to be alone. Even God said ‘It is not good for us to be alone’.”

And that’s the point I want to emphasize: You’re **not supposed to be alone**. It’s just that marriage is **not the only way**, any more, “not to be alone.”

⁶ Jon Tyson

- Listen: I **told you this**: A lot of times I'll hear people say, "All you need is God." That sounds really nice and spiritual and I've probably said it before.
- The problem is, **God never says that. He said, "It's not good that man should be alone."** He didn't look at Adam the Garden and say, "You've got me. That's enough."
- **He created us with the need for companionship.** *It's just that marriage is not the only way God takes care of that.*
- **Look at Mark 10:** "Truly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or lands, for my sake and for the gospel, who will not receive a hundredfold now in this time... (Mark 10:29-30). **IN THIS TIME: Not just in eternity, now.** The **ultimate community** in God's kingdom is the church.
- Listen: In Acts, we see that the early church faced every sort of hardship you can face--persecution, poverty, famine. But no one in the church ever seems to **be lonely.** The **body of Christ** was that community.

You say, "I really want to have kids." Jesus said, "Spiritual offspring are much more important, more eternal, than biological offspring."

- If you are single, **get involved in the discipleship ministries** of the church.
- **Spiritual offspring in the KoG** are more important than biological offspring.
- It is **OK to mourn the lack of ability** to have biological kids... That's a real loss. But, by grace, even that real grief can be overshadowed by the real joy of having eternal spiritual children.
 - We got a letter from 1 of our single missionaries who just came off the field where she's served for 6 years:

(For the first few years on the field, I grieved the "loss" of being able to have biological children, but God used that) "by grace and through tears, to make me the proudest and most

joy-filled (spiritual) mom on the planet the day I saw my spiritual son baptized in the unreached corners of East Asia.

I don't know what it's like to hold my baby for the first time. I'd imagine it feels like your heart's about to burst. I imagine that because that's how I felt as this young man came up from the baptismal waters. It was a beautiful moment for me.

The doctrine of spiritual children has by far been the most inspiring, joy-giving, biblical doctrine... maybe of my whole life.

And another perk... I only had to wait six months for a spiritual grandbaby."

- **Jesus was a eunuch**, so to speak, who never had biological children, but God gave him spiritual children all over the world.

The only part of your life that will be unfulfilled if you are single is sexual. And that's a **legitimate loss** and I don't want to minimize that.

- But God says **he will give you a special *charisma*** (spiritual empowerment) for that.
- Listen, **you don't have to turn to porn. In fact, I beg you to AVOID that.** That's a black hole of decay that's really hard to come back from. We'll get into it more later, but look to God for the enablement to live holy.
- **God can enable you to live a happy and fulfilled life without sex. Remember,** the most joy-filled, love-filled man ever walked the face lived without sex.
- **But the other things** marriage supplies--companionship and offspring, God gives you now, in an ultimate form, in eternal form, through the **church**.

- **You need that community:** **Rebecca McLaughlin**, one of my new favorite authors, says, *You won't wither without sex; you will wither without friend and family connection.*⁷

And God provides that in the church. My point: **If God calls you to singleness**--whether for a season or for your whole life--he will supply you with all the necessary graces to live a happy and fulfilled life in it.

Which brings us back to what Jesus taught last week in **Matthew 19:** Let the one who is able to receive this receive it." (Matt 19:12)

- The Greek receive is **chōreō**. It means "to make room" for something.
- **If God has called you to this--make room for it, he says, in your life.** Clear a path for it. And here's how you can do that.

1. Devote yourself to God

- You **need God's grace** to make it as a single or married person.
- So **whatever state you're in**, look here first.
- When the vertical is right, he gives the horizontal supply. When this relationship is broken, these will always suffer.
- Some of you **may not like** your singleness. But God means it for good in your life--to **produce a love for Christ** in you.

2. Leverage your singleness for all it is worth

- **Don't waste your singleness.**
- I read that the average young adult spends **10,000 hours of their life** playing video games. Or I hear about singles who spend all their time hanging out and goofing off or traveling.
- That's **not why God gave you this gift right now**. He gave it to you to **leverage for the Kingdom**.
- We need a generation of singles in this church to rise up with the compassion of Jesus in their hearts, who will put the video games

away and use the advantages afforded by their singleness to open up their hands and hearts to the **needs of the world**.

- **Invest in God's eternal family now. Make disciples for eternity!** You may not know when or if you'll get married and start a biological family, but you can invest in God's forever family now. And that's a decision I promise you that you'll never regret.
- **Let me say to our singles:** You are a **generation defined by FOMO**; I replace it with FOSO (fear of squandering opportunities). FOSO over you, in Jesus' name.⁸

3. Lean into the Forever Family

- You need the church, and they need you.
- **So get involved. Get to know people personally. And not just other singles.** Get involved in **people's families here**. Invest in their children.
- We have many single people in the church who act as spiritual big brothers or even parents to those children in the church who have been deprived of fathers or mothers or families, and we need many more! That's **what the church is**.
- That has been a huge blessing in our family.
- **Get involved** in our student ministry.

To THE CHURCH: We have a responsibility in this, too, to include the singles of this church into our families

- First, we need to see singles as the treasures Paul saw them as. Don't treat them like a project you need to fix.
- **But be aware that their particular calling** has some of its accompanying challenges and **invite them into** your family.
- **To join you in key moments. Not** just to come over and babysit your kids or help you move, by the way. *And all God's singles said...*

⁷ *Confronting Christianity*

⁸ Jon Tyson, "Singleness," from the series God & Sexuality, preached at Bridgetown Church on March 20, 2019.

- We've had **single friends** from the church go on vacation with us, do Thanksgiving with us. One even spent last Christmas with us. Stayed at our house on Christmas Eve and got up with us on Christmas morning.

Lastly,

4. (If you want to get married, or believe it's what God has for you) Use this time to build your identity in Jesus

We'll **get more into this next week**, but instead of obsessing about finding who is right for you, focus on becoming the person you should be.

Here's how I'll say it next week: Become the person that the person you are looking for is looking for.

Don't wait on a future spouse to **give you an identity**. Built that identity on Christ **today**.

You may say, "This all sounds great PJD, but if I'm being totally honest, you're a married, middle-aged man with a family. It's really easy for you to **preach about this stuff when you have no idea what it's actually like."** And you know what, I AGREE.

Which is why, right now, I'm going to invite two sisters in Christ here at TSC that I've really learned to love and respect up here with me on stage, and they can speak with both wisdom and experience on this subject.

Summit, would you join me in welcoming Lori Frances and Alex Akinsola to the stage?

Lori Frances directs all our sending here...

Alex is director of all our ministries at BRC... and, full disclosure, just got married.

[Singleness Q&A](#)

