

MY SOUL IS SATISFIED: SINGLENESS AND THE SUFFICIENCY OF CHRIST

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I am not quite sure how this happened, but a long time ago, my friends and family got it in their minds that I really, really love turtles. As a result, for the past 25 years, for Christmas and birthdays, and random gatherings, I have been getting various types of turtle gifts. Usually, they are not real turtles but toy turtles, model turtles, or turtle keychains.

Perhaps way back when I was ten, I might have thought turtles were cool. But I am in my thirties now, and I don't care anymore. It's not that I dislike them; I just feel indifferent towards them. I saw a turtle on the side of the road the other day, and I just kept driving. I didn't stop to see if it was okay. I didn't add it to my collection. I just kept going. It's just a turtle.

But multiple times every year, without fail, I am given this gift over and over again. And, of course, I always pretend to like it. I pretend that I don't mind that I am a full-grown adult and still get turtle socks for my birthday. I don't want the gift of turtles anymore! But at this point, I have gotten hundreds of them, and every year I think to myself, "great... another turtle."

All of us can probably think of an unwanted gift we've received at some point in our lives. And when we read Paul's teaching in 1 Corinthians 7

on the gift of singleness, it might seem like one of those unwanted gifts for many. It might not be something you want, but Paul seems excited for people to have it.

Some Christians view singleness as a bad thing, an unwanted gift, understanding singleness primarily through the lens of the trials it may bring or the blessings it deprives us of. The New Testament, however, presents both marriage and singleness as unique blessings and gifts from God. Yes, each brings challenges as well. Many are unhappily married or unhappily single. But God has graced each of us for the situation we are in presently.

As a single man, I've learned that my situation provides unique opportunities to serve Christ and display his sufficiency in my life. And I am eager for the

lives of all Christians who are single to testify to the satisfaction that Christ alone can give.

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The Goodness of Singleness

In 1 Corinthians 7:7, Paul says (speaking of his singleness), "I wish that all were as I myself am. But each has his gift from God, one of one kind and one of another." In the next verse, Paul even says that it is good for someone

who is not married to remain single, and in much of the rest of the chapter, he explains the opportunity that singleness can be to invest in the church and advance the gospel. Indeed, like Paul, there are some whom God has given a unique ambition to remain single and to use that freedom from the commitments of married life to give more time and energy to serving the church and spreading the gospel (verses 32-35).

There are also those who are single who haven't received clarity that this is their lifelong calling. Yet even in these situations, God has given the grace to honor the Lord in our singleness, and he affirms the importance of single men and women in his kingdom. The truth is, we all started our lives single, and many of us will end our lives single. We will certainly all spend eternity without earthly marriage, fully to enjoy the one eternal marriage between Christ and the church.

Churches today should affirm the goodness of singleness and equip those who have this gift. We do singles a disservice when we create undue pressure for them to get married. When we idolize marriage and family, we view singleness as a threat to Christian maturity—in short, when we treat their singleness as inferior. As the Statement of Faith for Sovereign Grace Churches affirms, “Single men and women are no less able to enjoy and honor God and no less important to his purposes. They also are to give expression to God’s image in distinct and complementary ways, flourishing as his image-bearers and bringing him glory in their singleness.”¹

Singleness is not an inferior status. Singles are no less important. God has called us to full human flourishing, just as we are.

When Singleness Brings Sorrow

And yet, it is a mistake to think that singleness is easy, just as it is a mistake to believe that marriage is easy. Many singles have the God-given desire to serve Christ in the context of marriage and family. And to have this desire while remaining in a season of singleness often brings many hardships. This might be where you find yourself right now.

Maybe you have been married in the past but are no longer. Perhaps you have never been married and are longing for the Lord to give you the gift of marriage. Maybe this season is a very difficult one: Lonely Friday nights ... attending yet another wedding alone ... coming back to an empty home and an empty bed ... longing for a family of your own ... feeling the heartbreak of a lost spouse ... caring for your children without a partner.

The pain of these things can be very real. And, friends, Jesus knows these sorrows. Hebrews 4:15 says that “we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses.” That truth applies fully to the difficulties of single life. Jesus himself was a single man all his days on this earth. He understands our needs and he loves to draw near to us in our pain and sorrow.

A Unique Opportunity

In 1 Corinthians 7, we see that we can trust Jesus in every season to give us joy and give us purpose. There are certain truths about Christ and his kingdom that shine most brightly through the lives of single men and women.

¹. [SOVEREIGN GRACE CHURCHES STATEMENT OF FAITH](#), 22.

God in his goodness has designed singleness to provide a unique opportunity to demonstrate how satisfying Christ is. Paul saw singleness as a unique way to serve Jesus, but he knew it also meant forgoing other good things in life. The single life lacks many of the wonderful things that marriage brings: companionship, sexual intimacy, and family, among others.

For all who are single, there is an excellent opportunity for us to show the world how satisfying Christ is by pursuing Christ more than we pursue marriage and family, by placing our hope more in Him than in a change in our marital status, and by looking to Him above all else for joy. If we live like this, Christ promises to be our satisfaction, and we will find that Jesus is enough.

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Singleness also provides a unique opportunity to serve. Paul recognized that his season of life provided an opportunity to devote his full time and attention to building up the church and to grow in godliness. For many, singleness also provides that freedom and flexibility to study, serve, and invest in those around you.

And, of course, the pursuit of these things should not stop if you are married. The point is that singleness can be a season of great value because of the unique opportunity it provides to pursue these things without the additional responsibilities of marriage.

Our Truest Joy

Singleness is not a holding pattern while awaiting true purpose or joy in life. Nor is singleness somehow a second-class standing in the Kingdom of God. One Corinthians 7 speaks to ways in which singles are uniquely valuable to the church. It speaks to ways in which singles can show with more clarity the satisfying love of Christ. It speaks to ways in which singles can serve the mission of the church with great effectiveness.

This is because our truest joy and deepest purpose are not found in our marital status; it is located in the person and the work of Jesus Christ. He is sovereign over your season of life. He has walked this road before us. He

is present to sustain and to satisfy your soul. And he has a meaningful and necessary purpose for your life in your current circumstance.

“O Father, use my ransomed life
In any way You choose
And let my song forever be
My only boast is You”²

Christ is sufficient.

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