

Message Discussion Guide THE GOSPEL AND SINGLENESS

The Church at Brook Hills,

Dr. David Platt

June 8, 2008

1 Corinthians 7

This guide is to help you facilitate discussion with your Small Group. Use it as a resource to lead your group in discovering and owning the truths of God's Word. There may be questions you do not want to use and there may be instances where you just want to focus on a particular point or truth. Some questions may bring out emotions and cause people to dwell on their relationship with God. Your role is to facilitate this experience not to complete the discussion guide. Use this as a flexible teaching tool not a rigid teaching task list.

Connect...

Use one or both of the following options to introduce the discussion time to follow.

Option 1

Revisit where David began his sermon with a contrast of some percentages from the beginning of the last century until now. He explained how in the early nineteenth century, adulthood and marriage were almost synonymous. And now, in the early twenty-first century, the number of single adults, (including those widowed, and divorced) is almost equal to married adults, around 50%.

- What do you think has led to this shift?
- Does this have any bearing on the local church, and how it functions?
- How could the body of Christ be positively motivated with these statistics?
- How could the body of Christ be negatively motivated with these statistics?
- Does this trend cause you to feel hope or discouragement, how so?

Option 2

A person's life can sometimes be summarized by life stages, (i.e. college, single, married, and senior adult) and the blessings and issues that accompany each of those stages. David reminded us, that as long as our identity is found in Christ, we are called to the same mission no matter what life stage we are in.

- Discuss some ways to encourage each of the above listed life stages to accomplish the mission for which God has called them.
- Do you feel as though a person can be content in any, all or only one of these stages, how so?
- As you look at life stages in comparison to identity, do you feel our culture has confused the two thus settling for a counterfeit identity?

Review the Message...

Three Foundations for Biblical Singleness...

- Both singleness and marriage are good.
 - Biblically, marriage is expected.
 - Biblically, singleness is exceptional.
- Both singleness and marriage are God's gifts.
 - Contentment is deep trust in the sovereignty of God.

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- **Contentment is deep enjoyment of the grace of God.**
- **Both singleness and marriage are for God's glory.**
 - **Singleness has a purpose we must be careful not to waste.**

Discussion Questions:

- Invite someone to read Genesis 1:26-28, 12:1-9, 17:1-6.
- How does the correlation between blessing and physical offspring still affect our modern day thinking? Do we struggle when we do not fit that model?
- Enlist someone to read Isaiah 53:7-12
- How does Isaiah speak of the coming Messiah? Does it highlight the picture of the promises given to Abraham (Genesis 12:1-3; 15:1-6) or are there contrasts?
- What could a person in Isaiah's time have thought regarding "the one" who would bear our iniquity, our sufferings and sorrows? If it was not to continue his family line (royalty), then what was it all for?
- Discuss the physical reality of Abraham's offspring in Abrahamic Covenant, and the concept of "spiritual" offspring to which Isaiah is pointing to in the coming Messiah.

Application...

- Where did we get our ideas of what values to place on singleness and marriage? Are there any adjustments that need to be made, in light of what David shared?
- David has shared in prior messages, the danger in separating God into parts of His character. Can you see, in light of a deep desire to "be married," how a single could separate the loving kindness of God from the sovereign aspect of His nature? How would that affect a single's contentment and relationship with their Lord God?
- How is grace afforded to both the single desiring to be married and the married desiring greater flexibility / freedom to minister? (In either situation, one must depend on God)

Four Reasons to Delight in Singleness...

- **Because of the times we're in.**
 - **We are looking forward to an eternal hope.**
- **Because of the mission we're on.**
 - **We are living for an eternal heritage.**
- **Because we want to be undistracted in our affections.**
 - **We guard against unholy sexual desires.**
 - **We guard against unholy selfish desires.**
- **Because we want to be undivided in our devotion.**
 - **We give ourselves wholly to a single desire:**

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To use His good gift for His great glory.

Discussion Questions...

- Enlist someone to read 1 Peter 1:3-7.
- Describe the spiritual inheritance we have in Christ versus the physical inheritance of the Old Covenant. [Note: This would be a great time to create a visual example with a white board or large pieces of paper – think biological vs. spiritual multiplication.]
- In this passage, what shields us (the power of God) and how is that afforded to us? (through faith)

Application Questions...

- In the Old Testament, people are often introduced or described by their lineage. The lineage of Christ is found in Matthew and in Luke, but we see a drastic halt to the sharing of lineages in the New Testament. Do you think this is at all due to what we have learned in this message, that our heritage is now securely grafted into Christ, and He into us?
- Could it be that God knew one of His sweetest gifts (marriage) would also cause a slowing of the spread of the gospel?
- How can married couples safeguard their lives, so as to minimize distraction to the new command in the new covenant, to “go and make disciples” (not necessarily “babies”)? [Note: Remember also that a parent’s first “small group” should be their children]
- Could it be that one of God’s sweetest gifts (singleness) would also cause a slowing of the spread of the gospel?
- How can singles safeguard their lives, so as to minimize the distraction of desiring a marriage? How can they maximize their lives to fulfill the new command in the new covenant, to “go and make disciples”?
- David mentioned that both single adults and married adults should practice contentment. He defined contentment as “deep trust in the Sovereignty of God.” How could cultivating this attitude help you live to accomplish Christ’s mission for you for his glory?