

What I Wish I Knew...

Living Single • Message 1

Bryan Jones

August 18, 2024

A. Introduction

I shared this with you guys' last year. But when I stepped into the role of Senior Pastor, my son Tristan said to my wife, *so dad is the boss over this whole church...* and my wife paused and said, *no, Jesus is the boss...* and Tristan said, *so, dad is like His sidekick...* and I love that...

But it's true. This is Jesus' church, and we want Him to be the center of everything. In 20 years of ministry, there has only been once or twice when God has put a sermon series this strong on my heart to preach on, and never has God woken me up in the middle of the night and said *I want you to preach on this...* so, buckle up.

And when God told me what to preach on, I very spiritually said, *I don't want to preach on this*, but since I'm the sidekick. Jesus won.

So, we are going to spend 5 weeks on this series called *What I Wish I Knew... Single. Dating. Married*. So, this will be a relationship series. God has burdened my heart for marriages, but the principles He's placed on my heart apply to friendships and other relationships. So, if you're single, dating, divorced or a teenager this series will apply to you...

We asked you guys for questions on what you wish you knew...

In fact, over the next four weeks I'm going to unpack four principles that I have seen in everything healthy marriage or dating relationship, and absent in any unhealthy marriage. These are principles that apply for every relationship, but I want to zoom in for marriage as well.

Before I do that, today, I want to talk about singleness... and you go *why talk about singleness...* I'll give you 3 reasons.

1. How many of you are single? Take a look, these are your prospects... No. Married people, do you know how many marriage talks single people have had to sit through... so sit back and suck it up.
2. Did any of you in this room get married before 18? 45% of adults over the age of 18 are single. Our country is increasingly more single. 28% of homes are single family occupants... so if that's not your picture of society, I want you to be aware this is way more prevalent than we realize.
3. We will all have a season of singleness.

Think about it, you are born single, you will die by yourself, and you will stand before God by yourself. Everybody has a season of singleness, and that season will end, statistically, for many, by marriage, and for some, by death... but you will have a season of singleness.

But knowing that you are in a season of singleness, or will go into one at some point, I want to talk to you about this subject because I have heard very few sermons on this, so I want us to have a biblical understanding...

So, I've titled this message **Living Single**... so let me give you some principles from our text today.

B. Living Single

1. Your singleness doesn't **DEFINE** you. Jesus does.

(1 Corinthians 7:7-9. C/R: John 4:17-18)

How many of you enjoy a rom-com here and there... any Hallmark movie people in here? It's a safe place... (ushers, could we go ahead and escort these folks out?)

But I confess, I'm one of the worst people to watch a romantic movie with... like one of the last ones I saw was *The Notebook*... and honestly, the people I was with were tearing up... and I'm watching this scene where Ryan Gosling is in the boat, and I don't get it...

Listen, all I could think of was, *why are there so many geese? Why does Ryan Gosling happen to have a white shirt on when it rains... and why does a rich family not have a better boat?*

But there are scenes like this... where people say lines like, *you complete me*... and culture creates the notion that happiness can only be found in another person...

And the danger is we unknowingly bring this into the church...

We say things to single people like, *why aren't you married now? When are you going to get married? What are you waiting for? I want some grandkids.*

Or we say things like *marriage is the best picture of God's love*... but it's about commitment... married people don't experience any more of the love of God than single people... it's not like once you get married, you all the sudden see God's love differently, it's about commitment.

Being married doesn't make you whole, dating doesn't make you whole... Jesus does, and that's why Paul says this...

But I wish everyone were single, just as I am. Yet each person has a special gift from God, of one kind or another. So I say to those who aren't married and to widows—it's better to stay unmarried, just as I am. But if they can't control themselves, they should go ahead and marry. It's better to marry than to burn with lust.

1 Corinthians 7:7-9 (NLT)

Notice Paul says he wishes everyone was single. As simple as this is, it's profound.

Because too many people believe that marriage will solve all the problems they have on the inside. But everyone who's married knows that's not true; you don't solve all your problems by getting married; you just put a ring on your problems...

One of the reasons I want to spend a whole sermon on singleness is this reason...

Listen some are single, and they want to be... but there are some of you who are single and want to be married... LET ME SAY THIS...

If you want to end married and happy, you have to start single and secure.

Security is an inside job... you don't get married and have your problems go away... it's always the job of the individual. It all comes from the inside.

If marriage could make us whole, Paul would say *I want all of you to be married*... instead he says, *I wish you could be as I am*... He's saying some are wired to be single, and it's good; others are wired to be married and that's good but...

Everyone must understand your relationship status doesn't define you. Jesus does.

Read card:

How am I supposed to trust in God and His promises to give us the desires of our hearts, when all I've ever wanted from a young age is a spouse and a family? It's all I've prayed, begged and pleaded for for many years. I'm getting old(er) now and that prayer seems so far from being answered. I've been a faithful follower from a young age.

The desire to get married is good. It's not bad. But culture and the church have got us thinking marriage defines us and not Jesus.

Remember the story of the woman at the well in John chapter 4.... Jesus talks to this woman who has had 5 husbands, and now she is living with this guy. He doesn't shame her... what He speaks about is her deep desires... and notice what bringing up the 5 men and the one she is living with... what's He doing... He's saying, *you're going from man to man to find deep satisfaction. It doesn't work.*

... Jesus said to her, "You are right when you say you have no husband. The fact is, you have had five husbands, and the man you now have is not your husband. What you have just said is quite true."

John 4:17-18 (NIV)

Now how many men has she been with total? 6... who is the 7th man in her life? Jesus... think about this do you know what the number 7 means in the Bible? It's completion.

It's almost like Jesus is saying, *I'm the only One who can satisfy and make you complete.* Don't you love that!

We have to get our relationship with God right before we can get a relationship with a man or woman right... Our country is in chaos, and part of that is because we are looking for a prince and princess instead of our King.

Relationships are important, but there is only One who can give you a deep sense of value and fill the longings of your heart. That's what Jesus wants us to know.

If you take all the verses on singleness, marriage and dating... it might be about this much, right? It's important, but notice, it's not the main storyline in the Bible...

But for many people, this is the main storyline of their lives. This is what's a priority; this is what counts; this is what it's all about... marriage is good, and relationships are good. God has given them to us... but it's not the main storyline of the Bible...

What is?

See, the storyline is that things aren't as they are intended to be, and we aren't as we were intended to be... we've all done things we aren't proud of... and God didn't sweep it under the rug. He sent Jesus to rescue and redeem us. Jesus came to this earth, and He only ever loved people, only ever served. The Bible says He was crushed for your sin... He would trade His crown for thorns, His glory for a tattered robe, His throne for a cross because He wanted to set you free... He was killed and buried, but He didn't stay there. He rose and conquered the grave... and He's on the move... finding people like the woman at the well and people who are trying to be filled up with the stuff of this world, and He comes to them and gives them deep life eternal life... by adopting us and putting us into the family line of Jesus. God is building a people and kingdom for Himself, and every one of us has been invited. This is the storyline. It's Jesus at the center.

- New Testament Apostle Paul wrote most of the New Testament who was single. It was a single person who baptized Jesus named John the Baptist.
- It was a single person who rebuilt the wall that provided a future and a hope for the people of Israel.
- It was a single person, when He went to Bethany and needed a house to do ministry at, He went to Martha, who often gets a bad rap because of her business, but I remind you she wasn't waiting around for a man or good fico score to buy a house and to live a life that blessed Jesus.
- It was 3 singles who grew up in Babylon that when a king tried to get the entire city to bow down to a golden image, stepped up and said even if it costs me my life, I won't bow down, and they were thrown into a furnace and God showed up in a mighty way.
- It was a single man named Daniel who God used to reveal dreams and truths about the kingdom of God
- And, oh yeah, when we needed a savior and rescuer for all of our sins... it was a single person named Jesus who did the unthinkable...

The point is simple, but profound: don't believe the lie that anything other than Jesus makes you whole...

2. Singleness is a GIFT, but it's not a gift we always want.

But I wish everyone were single, just as I am. Yet each person has a special gift from God, of one kind or another.

1 Corinthians 7:7 (NLT)

Did you notice where Paul says it's a gift... but isn't it true, some people don't like this.

Have you ever got a gift that didn't seem that great in the moment? When I was a kid, my grandparents got me a bond... and I remember getting this gift, and they say *it's like money, but you can't spend it*, but one day it will be worth more... this stinks...

There are things in my story I would never have chosen, but once I get out, I see a perspective I didn't see before.

In fact, when people walk through painful seasons, they will sometimes call it a gift, but it's a gift they would never have chosen... but they wouldn't change it... WHY? They have a perspective...

When we are given a season of singleness, even when we don't want it, there may be something good and wise and kind to that... there may be perspective we don't have yet...

So, some of us I want to challenge our picture of God, and stop thinking He isn't good or kind, but He is good, that the season as much as you don't appreciate it is His kindness to grow or do something in you

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.

1 Corinthians 7:35 (NIV)

Notice he says God isn't punishing you... He's not trying to restrict you, or hold you back...

Notice the phrase *a right way*... there is a right way to do things and a wrong way

Just because your single doesn't mean you're doing it right...

If you show up to a pool with a swimsuit—it's the right way.

If you show up to a funeral in a bathing suit—it's not the right way.

Think about it: there are things that I can say to my wife that are honoring, flattering, good, and romantic, but if one of you says the same things to my wife... we have to fight... why? Because it's not right ☺

So, Paul is saying yes, singleness is a gift, but there is a right way and a wrong way to approach singleness... so what is the right way?

Look at what it says... the right way to approach singleness is undivided devotion to the Lord.
When you are single, you will have two things that married people don't...

Discretionary time
Freedom

Paul is saying that for you to utilize the gift of singleness, you don't just fill your time with distractions or your job or career... give it to the Lord, seek Him. Focus on Him... Find ways to serve and pour into others.

There is a lady in our church named Dawn Carter... she is single. She shared with me that several Easters ago, the Lord was inviting her to the gift of singleness. She said *I wasn't sure if wanted it*. But the Lord called her to serve Him... Friends, every week I'm at the church. Dawn is here meeting with someone and pouring out her heart. She is a trustee, she leads prayer teams, and serves everywhere.

Recently, someone sat down with me and shared some deep and painful stuff they were walking through, something they hadn't told anyone... and I asked this person *is there anyone who could walk through this with you...* she paused and said *a while ago I was going through a difficult time, and Dawn was there...*

I sat amazed at how God has used someone in a season of singleness... I guarantee you if you ask Dawn, she would say there are ups and downs.... But I promise you this: Dawn and other singles in our church have an undivided devotion to the Lord that, simply put, others who are married with children can't have.

If you are in a season of singleness, does an undivided devotion to the Lord reflect how you are spending your time?

3. Live in the SEASON you are in.

(1 Corinthians 7:32-34)

We tend to highlight the benefits of other seasons, and downplay the blessings of the current season...

Think about it, for a portion of your life, you can't wait to be older. Then, when you get older, you want to be younger. The challenge and invitation for all of us is to live in this moment and this season right now.

You aren't promised tomorrow, you are promised today, so live fully present and fully in tune with this moment.

Don't wish away what you can't get more of. Time.

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.

1 Corinthians 7:32-34 (NIV)

If you are single, be aware there are some wonderful and difficult things...

When you are single, you can go to work, and crash on the couch, and you let cable wash over you...

If you are married, and you come home and think you're just going to sit on the couch, but your wife is going to sit down and ask how your day is... and you know what won't work: "fine" "good" or bad... she is going to want to details, details, details, then she's going to talk about details, and you're going to have to listen with your face... and you're going to have go there emotionally... and your going have to do this until you die. Look at the married men... have you ever wondered why they are so tired... and why they have so little hair...

Then women when you get married...

There are things that his momma did that he's going to expect you to do for him, and you are going to be thinking, *no sir...*

And then, some of you are going to marry and go whose level of cleanliness isn't just poor.... Pause... it's not safe... it's not right for a human to live like this... it's just not right.

Now I love being married... we tend to amplify the benefits of another stage and downplay our current season... don't miss out... that's the point... live in the season you are in...

Let not our appetites slay our appetites for living. Jim Elliot said that to someone longing to be married...

Does this define your singleness... is your anxiety to please the Lord... the season is to secure your devotion... if you miss that it will be frustration season. You will miss the point or fill it with other things.

God will give you grace for the season you are in. If He puts you in the position, He will give you the power. Some of you, He will decrease your desire to get married... others of you, as you give it to Him, it will end statistically in marriage. Peter had kids... Paul didn't.