

# DAY ONE

## MYTHS ABOUT SINGLENESS

Do you think a Christian who remains single can have a full, meaningful life? Why or why not?

List benefits of remaining single.

List challenges of being single.

Let's examine three myths people believe about singleness.

### MYTH #1: SINGLENESS MEANS NO FAMILY.

Some of my single friends enjoy singleness and don't want to get married. Others want to be married, but for whatever reason are not. Does this mean they don't have a family?

What do you think? Do single people have a family? Explain.

In the Old Testament, the family was central to God's plan for filling the earth and redeeming it. But Jesus transforms the nature of family in the New Testament.

#### READ MATTHEW 12:46-50.

*While he was still speaking to the people, behold, his mother and his brothers stood outside, asking to speak to him. But he replied to the man who told him, "Who is my mother, and who are my brothers?" And stretching out his hand toward his disciples, he said, "Here are my mother and my brothers! For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother."*

Jesus taught that status is not determined by the natural family (such as mom, dad, brothers, sisters, etc.), but based on a relationship with God. Brothers and sisters in Christ are now more important than brothers and sisters in the natural family.

Single people may not have a spouse or biological children, but they are equal members of God's family right along with married people. We must treat them that way.

### MYTH #2: SINGLENESS IS EASY.

For many young people, the single adult life can seem like a thrilling adventure. Go where you want. Eat what you want. Basically, do what you want, when you want to, and however you want to do it. You are the captain of your soul. Right?

How do you tend to view the single life?

But many people find the single life quite challenging. It means no lifetime partnership of a spouse, no sex, and no children. Companionship comes from friendship, but friendships are not always as faithful and committed as a spouse and children.

How can singles find the strength to be faithful? The key is the same for both single people and married people: look to Christ for contentment. Neither singleness nor marriage can bring lasting contentment. The key is not to make singleness or marriage into our source of contentment, but to look to Christ regardless of our relationship status.

### MYTH #3: SINGLENESS IS TOO DIFFICULT.

Rather than viewing marriage as too difficult for some to embrace, many people today view singleness as the more difficult road. Singleness is now considered tough (often because of the lack of sexual activity), and marriage is considered easy.

But both marriage and singleness can be difficult. Even though the challenges of marriage and singleness are different, neither one is easy. But they aren't too difficult either. Many young people today prove this with their own lives. Although they are a minority, these young Christians reject the worldly narrative about sex and embrace the radical call of Jesus.

How has this study challenged your thinking about singleness as a Christian?

# DAY TWO

## THE MARRIAGE DESIGN

The best way to find the purpose of marriage is to go back to God's original design for marriage (as we did for sex). After all, God is the one who invented marriage in the first place. The best way to know what to expect in marriage is to ask the question, "What is marriage for?"

**How would you answer the question: What is marriage for?**

This takes us back to Genesis—to two vital passages for understanding the purpose of marriage.

### READ GENESIS 1:27-28A; 2:24.

*So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. And God blessed them. And God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it. . . . Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh."*

These passages offer seven important insights about the nature of marriage.

- 1. Marriage involves partners of equal value.** Unlike other ancient creation stories, the Bible considers women to have equal value to men. Do you realize how radical this is? The Bible begins with the proclamation that both men and women are equal image-bearers of God. Eve is described as being Adam's helper (*ezer*) but this does not imply inferiority. In fact, God is often described as our *ezer* (see Ps. 30:10). *Ezer* can mean to defend, support, or to be an ally.<sup>2</sup>
- 2. Marriage is meant to be permanent.** The man is to leave his father and mother and "hold fast" to his wife (see Gen. 2:24). The Hebrew word for hold (*dabaq*) carries the idea of joining, bonding, and sticking together as one.<sup>3</sup> By the way, the Bible does not need to force this idea of permanence on love. As human beings, we deeply desire permanent love. Think about how many songs are written and sung about a love that is meant to last forever. The desire for permanent love is written on our hearts and described in the early chapters of Genesis.
- 3. Marriage is a gendered institution.** According to Genesis, God designed males and females to complement one another. Men and women share common humanity but differ in their biological gender. Marriage is not an institution of any two people, but of two opposite-sexed people.
- 4. Marriage is about procreation.** As we have seen, God designed sex to be experienced in the context of marriage. A key purpose of marriage is having kids. Marriage is the institution God designed to "multiply and fill the earth" (Gen. 1:28).
- 5. Marriage is about companionship.** Genesis describes the married couple as becoming "one flesh" (Gen. 2:24), which means they become one—spiritually, physically, emotionally, and relationally. Marriage is a complete union that includes a relational dimension. Later stories in Genesis—such as those of Abraham and Sarah, Isaac and Rebekah, and Jacob and Rachel—support the idea that marriage involves deep companionship.
- 6. Marriage is meant to be monogamous.** The man is meant to leave his father and mother and "hold fast to his wife" (Gen. 2:24). When the man leaves his parents' household, he creates a household with his wife. Even though Old Testament figures often had many wives and failed to live this commandment, God's intent from the beginning has been that marriage involves one man and one woman.
- 7. Marriage is good.** As we saw earlier, procreation was not a result of the fall, but part of God's good creation. The same is true for marriage. Although there is much hurt and brokenness in how people experience marriage today, God has deemed marriage "very good" (Gen. 1:31) since the beginning.

**Which of these seven insights about marriage differs most from how the world sees it? Why?**

**What are some ways your view of marriage has changed as a result of this study?**

These seven insights are vital for understanding what God originally designed marriage for. If you choose to marry someday, remember that marriage is not about finding your soulmate as the secret to a meaningful life. Marriage is about something much bigger. It is about sacrificing for your spouse and kids and showing God's loving character to the church and the rest of the world.

# DAY THREE

## A CLEAR DESIGN

### READ ROMANS 1:21-27.

*For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened. Claiming to be wise, they became fools, and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things. Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves, because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever! Amen. For this reason God gave them up to dishonorable passions. For their women exchanged natural relations for those that are contrary to nature; and the men likewise gave up natural relations with women and were consumed with passion for one another, men committing shameless acts with men and receiving in themselves the due penalty for their error.*

**What is the connection between worshiping idols and rejecting God's design for sex?**

**Paul used the term "unnatural" to describe activities that go against God's design for sex. If those things are "unnatural," what is "natural," or abundantly clear and obvious, about God's design for sex?**

Paul explained that just as turning to idols violates our rightful duty to worship our Creator, turning to homosexual behavior violates God's natural design for the use of the body as male and female.

**How does homosexual behavior worship and serve the creation rather than the Creator?**

### MISINTERPRETED MEANING

Many advocates for same-sex relationships believe verses 26-27 only refer to sexual abuse of children. Because some also believe certain men or women are born with homosexual desires, they claim that sexual union between those same-sex couples is

"natural."<sup>4</sup>

But Paul explained that the opposite is true: sexual relationships between members of the same sex are unnatural—they are not God's intended design (see Lev. 18:22).

As we've talked about throughout the book, God designed marriage for one man and one woman for life. When Paul said "natural," this is what he meant.

Our hearts are imperfect and our desires aren't always good, or as Mark 7:20-22 says, "And he said, 'What comes out of a person is what defiles him. For from within, out of the heart of man, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, coveting, wickedness, deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride, foolishness.'" This is why following our desires in regard to sex—rather than God's design—is so incredibly destructive.

**When have your heart's desires turned out not to be for your good?**

Others have claimed that Paul was condemning excessive lust, not loving, same-sex relationships. In this passage, Paul said that people were "consumed with passion for one another" (Rom 1:27). He condemned the shameful acts themselves. But why? Because they reflect a denial of the existence of God by violating His clearly seen design for men and women. (See Rom. 1:18-21.)

The focus of Romans 1 is not on excessive lust, but on the idolatrous nature of people who have suppressed their knowledge of God, worshiping things in creation rather than the Creator. And they rejected God's natural design for sexual relations. Paul pointed back to creation as the foundation for sexual morality, just like Jesus did.

**Have you put any kind of sexual desire or relationship above God? What changes can you make to put God first in every area of your life?**