



4 Myths About Singleness

Second in a 3-part mini-series titled: *Trending*
Part of the larger 10-week *Family Bundle* series

Pastor Matt Friend – October 7 & 10, 2021
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– OUTLINE –

What are the four myths of singleness (and the truths that set us free)?

Myth #1 – Singleness is bad, while only marriage is good.

- Truth: God calls both marriage and singleness good; however, single Christians often have more freedom to serve the Lord.

Myth #2 – Singleness means no family.

- Truth: Jesus elevates our spiritual family above our physical family.

Myth #3 – Singleness wastes your sexuality.

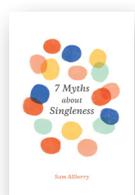
- Truth: Sexuality and intimacy are not the same thing. God wants every Christian to experience intimacy with Him and other believers; however, God wants single Christians to abstain from sex until marriage or until the resurrection.

Myth #4 – Singleness is easy.

- Truth: Singleness is impossible, just like marriage is impossible; yet, Jesus is sufficient!

What is today's takeaway?

Find your ultimate satisfaction in Jesus!



Resource Recommendation

[*7 Myths About Singleness*](#)

By Sam Allberry

Glorifying God by producing more maturing followers of Jesus



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– NOTES –

Introduction:

Let's take a quiz. All answers are true/false:

1. Mount Everest is the tallest mountain in the world?
2. You have two nostrils?
3. Christopher Columbus discovered America.

The world is full of myths that we readily believe to be true, but actually are not.

Today I'll be speaking on the *4 Myths about Singleness*. As it turns out, there are many myths that we've come to believe about singleness (and about our single family members and friends), yet they are no more true than the myths about Columbus or your nostrils.

If you're married, you'll want to pay attention to these four myths. Ask yourself, "Which ones have I been believing?"

If you're not married but plan to be, you'll want to pay attention. The truth is that half of us who are married will be single again at some point.

To those of you who are single, I pray this message refreshes your soul. Please give me feedback about where I'm right, where I'm wrong, or how I could say some of this better. I'm not the expert on singleness (just like I'm not the expert on widowhood or being a senior saint or being a student); however, I want to be faithful to the Bible and minister to all the people in our congregation.

What are the four myths of singleness (and the truths that set us free)?

Myth #1 – Singleness is bad, while only marriage is good.

Have you ever noticed how we almost always describe singleness in the negative? "Singleness is the state of not being married," we say. Single people are unmarried. I've often wondered why don't we call married people un-single? Unfortunately, this negative definition of singleness reinforces the



idea that there is nothing intrinsically good about singleness; it is merely the state of lacking what is good in marriage. We sometimes insinuate that singles are deficient in some way.

Ask a single friend what it's like to strike up a new conversation with almost anyone. Soon into the discussion, someone will ask, "Are you married?" or "Do you have a family?" When your single friend answers in the negative, people often don't quite know what to do with it and the conversation grinds to a halt. Marriage, it seems, is a conversational highway, with all sorts of interesting twists and turns of discussion. Singleness is more of a conversational *cul-de-sac*, requiring an awkward maneuver to exit.

Unfortunately, we Christian leaders haven't helped much. One prominent leader recently made the following remarks about singleness: "Let me tell you the most devastating attack on marriage today is coming from singleness. Singleness is an assault on marriage. Marriage is the grace of life. As a pastor, I tell my people, 'Look, if it keeps going this way, I'm gonna line all the girls on one side, all the guys on the other, we're gonna just match you up and have a huge wedding.' I just see singleness as a disaster."

However meaningful that speaker was, that is not the Bible's view of singleness.

→ Truth: God calls both marriage and singleness good; however, single Christians often have more freedom to serve the Lord.

I wish that all of you were as I am. But each of you has your own gift from God; one has this gift, another has that. -1 Corinthians 7:7 (NIV)

I've heard some talk about the "supernatural gift" of singleness. In one sense it's true; yet, Paul's point is that both marriage and singleness are a gift. Both marriage and singleness require grace.

But if you do marry, you have not sinned; and if a virgin marries, she has not sinned. But those who marry will face many troubles in this life, and I want to spare you this. -1 Corinthians 7:28 (NIV)

Paul is by no means a critic of marriage. In Ephesians 5 he upholds marriage as a beautiful illustration of Jesus and His bride, the Church. He even says in 1 Timothy 4 that anybody who is against the institution of marriage is a false teacher. However, Paul is a realist. Marriage is not easy. There is often much heartache and burden that comes with it. Some marriages, unfortunately, end in divorce. If you outlive your spouse, you



(most likely) will end up caring for your spouse physically in ways you never thought you would have to. Children bring blessings and heartache.

When Sarah and I do marriage counseling, we have a list of 20 questions that we use to instigate conflict. Our goal is to get the couple arguing. You say, “That’s horrible!” No, it’s real life. I want them to learn now how to resolve conflict before they get married.

Singleness is not just about what someone is spared; it’s also about what someone is given...

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. 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 7:32-35 (NIV)

Paul is not saying that singleness is easy but marriage is hard. No, the contrast is between *complexity* and *simplicity*. Married life, according to Paul, is more complicated; singleness is more straightforward. According to Paul, single men and women are able to serve others in ways that married people often cannot. As a single man, Paul was able to travel widely, to spend extended periods of time in particular places, even risking his life for the cause of the gospel without the worries of protecting a wife and children.

Think with me about some of the most devoted servants in our church. Some of them are single. When we get to heaven, I’ll be so far away from Jesus and they’ll be so close on the front row that I’ll need binoculars to see them.

Myth #2 – Singleness means no family.

Recently I heard where one dear Christian mother of two (not in our church) was talking to a Christian man who is single. She meant no ill will; however, she said, “One of my kids is married and the other is engaged, so they are both sorted.” Our Christian brother walked away asking himself, “Does that mean I’m unsorted?” It’s hard to avoid the implication.



Comments like this, often unintentionally, tend to imply that singles are like little loose threads that have been left dangling and need to be tied up. It's like they are still awaiting processing or something.

→ Truth: Jesus elevates our spiritual family above our physical family.

Jesus defines family along spiritual lines rather than biological lines.

While Jesus was still talking to the crowd, his mother and brothers stood outside, wanting to speak to him. Someone told him, "Your mother and brothers are standing outside, wanting to speak to you." He replied to him, "Who is my mother, and who are my brothers?" Pointing to 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." – Matthew 12:46-50 (NIV)

This was offensive to the Jewish culture of that day which highly valued the institution of family. "How dare he treat his blood relatives that way?" It's possible that Mary was hurt by his words, "Doesn't he know that I'm His mother?" His brothers probably wanted to punch him, "Who does he think he is? We've walked a long way to see him." And, in many respects, it's can be potentially offensive to our culture, especially in our region where blood is thicker than water.

Now, obviously, Jesus wasn't teaching us to reject our blood relatives. Later he and the Apostles teach us to love our spouses, to honor our parents, to take care of our own. It's just that, here, Jesus was expanding the circle and redefining who "our own" really are. Jesus was reminding us that God has always been calling out a people for Himself—a people of every kindred, tongue, tribe, and nation. Today we call this people the Church. This is the family of God.

I like what writer Bethany Jenkins said, "As a Christian, I worship a man who was a biologically childless parent. Jesus Christ never married, never had kids, yet he said: 'Behold, I and the children God has given me' (Hebrews 2:13). Jesus never held a son or daughter in his arms, but he nonetheless came to bear children, to give birth to a people—like me and perhaps you—who now bear his family resemblance."

Myth #3 – Singleness wastes your sexuality.

According to the Scriptures, God calls single men and women to be commit-



ted to sexual abstinence. The Bible is clear that sex outside of marriage is sinful, something that is underlined in the teaching of Jesus. Is it forgivable? Absolutely. But let us remember that it is still sinful. To be biblically single is to refrain from any sexual behavior. If you're single long term, as a Christian that means Jesus calls you to be sexually abstinent long term.

This is very different from the predominantly secular culture around us which sees marriage as sexually constraining, while singleness is seen to be sexually freeing. As matter of fact, from the world's perspective, people who don't have sex are the odd ones, as seen in Steve Carell's movie, *The 40-Year-Old Virgin*. The whole premise behind the movie is that to be a virgin at 40 years old is horrifying at worst and utterly laughable at best.

Behind the comedy of such movies lies a serious belief, one that is widespread in the Western world today: without sex you can't really experience what it means to be truly human. According to this thinking, our sense of personhood is directly attached to our sex life. To ignore this side of us, to deliberately not express and fulfill it, is (said to be) doing harm to ourselves. It's not healthy, they claim. Those who are celibate and single, it is believed, are not just quaint and old-fashioned, but deluded and dangerous.

From the world's perspective, for me to call our Christian singles to celibacy is considered to be cruel. However, if we are a Bible-centered people we must draw our authority from God's Word. One of the prevailing myths today is that Jesus was tolerant when it comes to sexual ethics. "Sure," people tend to think, "the OT had some strict things to say about marriage and sexuality, and Paul was evidently having the theological equivalent of a bad hair day when he was writing some of his letters, but Jesus was much more relaxed about these things and didn't seem to have any of the hang-ups that His followers today are accused of having." Let's see...

For out of the heart come evil thoughts—murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, slander. These are what defile a person; but eating with unwashed hands does not defile them." –Matthew 15:19-20 (NIV)

This is not an exhaustive list but a representative one. "Sexual immorality" is from one Greek word, *porneia*, which is what Matthew originally wrote. If that sounds a little familiar, it's because we get the word pornography from it. At the time of Jesus, *porneia* referred to any sexual behavior outside of marriage. It would have included premarital sex, prostitution, adultery (which Jesus also lists separately), and same-sex behavior. Such sexual activity, Jesus says, defiles us. Sex outside of marriage is a sin. Jesus is not so sexually tolerant, as it happens.



Jesus even took it one step further...

You have heard that it was said, “You shall not commit adultery.” But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart. –Matthew 5:27-28

Some have asked, “But what about the mercy Jesus showed the woman caught in adultery in John 8?” Thankfully Jesus didn’t condemn this woman. He provided salvation. However, after her salvation he said, “Go and sin no more.”

What is Jesus’ sexual call for single people?

Jesus said, "Marriage isn't for everyone. Some, from birth seemingly, never give marriage a thought. Others never get asked—or accepted. And some decide not to get married for kingdom reasons." –Matthew 19:12 (The Message)

Now to the unmarried and the widows I say: It is good for them to stay unmarried, as I do. 9 But if they cannot control themselves, they should marry, for it is better to marry than to burn with passion. –1 Corinthians 7:8-9 (NIV)

Talk about old-fashioned, right? These verses seem so old fashioned they make *Downtown Abbey* and *Little House on the Prairie* look like *Bridgerton*. However, do we take our marching orders from the Bible or not? Are we Bible-centered or not?

Christians who still maintain the biblical sexual ethic of heterosexual marriage being the only appropriate context for sexual activity are often accused of cruelty at this very point. To insist on sex-free singleness for those who are unmarried is seen as unfair and deeply damaging.

So, where does that leave single people who are invited to live celibate lives? Does that mean their sexuality is wasted because it’s not being used? Why would it be okay for us to leave something unutilized that God gave us? Is it really a waste?

The answer to this question lies in two verses...

For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.” This is a profound mystery—but I am talking about Christ and the church. –Ephesians 5:31-32 (NIV)

Think about it. Our sexuality is designed to mean something. The sexual union in marriage is intended to picture something more profound, something eternal



and spiritual: Christ and His Church. Human marriage, then, reflects the big story of the Bible. Every time a bride and groom stand there and take their vows and go off to their honeymoon, they are reenacting the biblical love story whether they realize it or not.

Is the sexuality of a single Christian wasted? The answer to this question also lies in Matthew 22...

At the resurrection people will neither marry nor be given in marriage; they will be like the angels in heaven. But about the resurrection of the dead—have you not read what God said to you, “I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob”? He is not the God of the dead but of the living.” When the crowds heard this, they were astonished at his teaching. –Matthew 22:30-33

All marriages end up in singleness. In this life, with the exception of couples who die simultaneously, half of all married couples will end in singleness. However, in the resurrection, there will be no marriage. Marriage is temporary, momentary, fleeting. In the resurrection, there will not be any more earthly marriage as we know it today.

So, when a Christian single seeks to reserve his/her sexuality either for a future marriage or to abstain until the resurrection, they become a walking billboard of a future reality. In a way that a married person cannot, a celibate Christian single can declare, in a world obsessed with sexual and romantic intimacy, that these things are not ultimate and that in Christ we possess what is.

→ Truth: Sexuality and intimacy are not the same thing. God wants every Christian to experience intimacy with Him and other believers; however, God wants single Christians to abstain from sex until marriage or until the resurrection.

Unfortunately, our world has confused the two.

Marriage is not the only answer to being alone. Meaningful love and intimacy are meant to be found in a variety of human relationships. To assume intimacy is intrinsically and fundamentally sexual is peculiarly Western and recent. It is also unbiblical.

Scripture is full of examples of deeply rich but non-sexual intimacy: Ruth and Naomi, David and Jonathan, Jesus and John. When Jesus wants to show us the greatest expression of love, it's friendship he reaches for, not marriage.



Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends.
–John 15:13 (NIV)

I grieve for you, Jonathan my brother; you were very dear to me. Your love for me was wonderful, more wonderful than that of women. –2 Samuel 1:26 (NIV)

That verse says as much about David's poor relationships with women as it does his friendship with Jonathan. It is possible to have a lot of sex in life and not have intimacy. (Isn't that what we see in our world's hookup culture?) The reverse is also true: it is possible to have a lot of intimacy in life and not have sex.

Jesus wants you to have spiritual intimacy. This is why we work so hard to create environments for community here at Bible Center Church.

Myth #4 – Singleness is easy.

Ask just about any Christian single if it's easy. He or she will tell you it's not.

Depending on the person you talk to, he or she may let you know it's not easy for multiple reasons:

- Wedding showers
- Baby showers
- Child dedications
- Sermon series on marriage or sex
- Checkboxes on forms where one is asked to mark "married" or "single"
- 2-for-1 supermarket offers where they know they only need one
- Entering a party alone
- Entering church alone
- Nagging or joking family
- Nagging or joking friends
- Nagging or joking pastors or church members

"Singleness feels impossible," some have said.

If this is you, let me assure you that behind the marriages isn't paradise. Everything that glitters around here isn't gold. Marriage has its difficulties too.

But here's the last truth to remember...



→ Truth: Singleness is impossible, just like marriage is impossible; yet, Jesus is sufficient!

“If marriage shows us the shape of the gospel, singleness shows us its sufficiency.” –Sam Allberry

Let’s remember that Jesus, our Lord and Savior, willingly chose for himself the single life. Just as he chose to become fully human and fully male (with all the sexual temptations of being male), Jesus chose to live a single, celibate life, never having a romantic relationship nor having sex.

Why do I mention that? Because Jesus wasn’t a half-baked human being. Jesus wasn’t the loser that culture tries to make celibate singles out to be. He is the most complete and fully human person who has ever lived. And it’s this man, the God-man, who lived and died to offer you salvation!

It’s Jesus who says...

- “I will never leave you nor forsake you.” –Hebrews 13:5 (NIV)
- “I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.” –John 15:5 (NIV)
- “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.” –Matthew 11:28-30 (NIV)
- “I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never go hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty.” –John 6:35 (NIV)

What is today’s takeaway?

Whether you be married or single, find your ultimate satisfaction in Jesus!