

Think It Over: This section is about turning what God is saying to you into action steps. These talking points, questions, and scriptures are designed to help you take your own next step. If you are leading a group through this guide, don't feel like you have to answer every question. Pick out those questions that will stir up conversation and action among your group.

- Describe a time when you experienced contentment and/or a settling peace. Why is it hard to live out of contentment and/or peace? As a Christ follower, what are the implications? Read 1 Corinthians 7:17 MSG: *“And don't be wishing you were someplace else or with someone else. Where you are right now is God's place for you. Live and obey and love and believe right there. God, not your marital status, defines your life. Don't think I'm being harder on you than on the others. I give this same counsel in all the churches.”* What are the takeaways?
- Review the three types of singleness. What does it mean to you that marriage and singleness are temporary gifts? Read Matthew 22:30 MSG: *“At the resurrection we're beyond marriage. As with the angels, all our ecstasies and intimacies then will be with God.”* Consider the context around verse 30. What is Jesus saying? How does it make you feel? CS Lewis compared his short marriage to a ray of the sun: *“a ray which warms our face and makes us look back up along the ray to the God from whom it emanates.”* What do you like or not like about Lewis' comparison?
- Read 1 Corinthians 7:28-38 from Message Guide. What jumps out at you? What questions do you have?
- What are the gifts of singleness? Are there more? How have you seen the gifts of singleness play out in the life of a single? What about the challenges? Why is the Rebecca McLaughlin quote so counter-culture (see Super Bowl commercials for reference)? Does loneliness go completely away in marriage? What does loneliness point to? How is God the only answer?
- Review the *Encouragement to Single People* section. How can you reinforce them as you live your life? Review the *Encouragement to Married People* section. How can you reinforce them as you live your life?

Next Steps: Look at the Bottom Line. What are the gifts in your life? Have you claimed your marital status a gift? Why or why not? What do you need to change in your thinking to accept your marital status as a gift? How are you making your gift about the Gift Giver and celebrating Him?

Changing Your Mind: Choose one of the verses listed in the Message Guide and commit it to heart.



If you missed a message, visit www.scc.website or request a CD at Guest Services.



¹¹“Not everyone is meant to remain single—only those whom God gives grace to be unmarried. ¹²For some are born to celibacy; others have been made [celibate] by others. And there are some who have chosen to live in celibacy for the sacred purpose of heaven's kingdom realm. Let those who can, accept this truth for themselves.”
Matthew 19:11–12 TPT

➤ Three types of singleness

➤ Born Single

Will not pursue a sexual relationship with another.

“Is celibacy difficult? Yes (so is marriage; farming; teaching; so is grad school; life is pain, princess). Is it frustrating at times? Yes! Have there been times when I wanted to give up? Yes. But is it worth it? Yes. And do I regret it? No.”
Ron Belgau

➤ Faithfully Single

⁴Honor marriage, and guard the sacredness of sexual intimacy between wife and husband. God draws a firm line against casual and illicit sex.
Hebrews 13:4 MSG

➤ Radically Single

⁷Sometimes I wish everyone were single like me—a simpler life in many ways! But celibacy is not for everyone any more than marriage is. God gives the gift of the single life to some, the gift of the married life to others.
1 Corinthians 7:7 MSG

Marriage and singleness are gifts,
temporary gifts for the fulfillment
of God's purposes in your life.

²⁸But if you decide to get married, this is not a sin; there is nothing wrong with a young woman taking a husband, but know that marriage is not easy and those who marry will face hard times. I am only trying to protect you.

1 Corinthians 7:28 Voice

²⁹What I mean, brothers and sisters, is that the time is short. From now on those who have wives should live as if they do not; ³⁰those who mourn, as if they did not; those who are happy, as if they were not; those who buy something, as if it were not theirs to keep; ³¹those who use the things of the world, as if not engrossed in them. For this world in its present form is passing away.

1 Corinthians 7:29–31 NIV

²⁹I do want to point out, friends, that time is of the essence. There is no time to waste, so don't complicate your lives unnecessarily. Keep it simple—in marriage, ³⁰grief, joy, whatever. Even in ordinary things—your daily routines of shopping, and so on. ³¹Deal as sparingly as possible with the things the world thrusts on you. This world as you see it is on its way out. ³²I want you to live as free of complications as possible. When you're unmarried, you're free to concentrate on simply pleasing the Master. ³³Marriage involves you in all the nuts and bolts of domestic life and in wanting to please your spouse, ³⁴leading to so many more demands on your attention. The time and energy that married people spend on caring for and nurturing each other, the unmarried can spend in becoming whole and holy instruments of God. ³⁵I'm trying to be helpful and make it as easy as possible for you, not make things harder. All I want is for you to be able to develop a way of life in which you can spend plenty of time together with the Master without a lot of distractions.

1 Corinthians 7:29–35 MSG

³⁶But I have this advice for every single man: If anyone thinks he is behaving badly toward his fiancée, if his desires prove to be too much for him, and if he feels they ought to marry, then he should do what he wants; it is not wrong to marry her. It is better that we let men and women in this situation do as they wish and get married.

1 Corinthians 7:36 Voice

³⁷On the other hand, if a man is comfortable in his decision for a single life in service to God and it's entirely his own conviction and not imposed on him by others, he ought to stick with it. ³⁸Marriage is spiritually and morally right and not inferior to singleness in any way, although as I indicated earlier, because of the times we live in, I do have pastoral reasons for encouraging singleness.

1 Corinthians 7:37–38 MSG

➔ The gifts of being single

- You are free from the complexity of marriage.
- You are freer to pursue God.

➔ The challenges of being single

➤ Sexual temptation

“In modern society, we are led to believe we cannot live without sex. In fact, I believe we are more likely to wither without friend and family love.”

Rebecca McLaughlin, *Confronting Christianity*

➤ Loneliness

➔ Encouragement to single people

- God is not waiting for you to find a spouse.
- Practice self-care (healthy relationships).
- Reject the online dating myth.
- When it's time, don't wait!
- Never settle.

³⁹...he must belong to the Lord. 1 Corinthians 7:39 NIV

➔ Encouragement to married people

- Never think of singles as a second class of Christians.
- Include singles in the life of your family and church.

Bottom Line

Your gift is always about the Gift Giver.

Resources for this message include a message by James Emery White at Mecklenburg Community Church, Summit Church, and The Village Church.

To help you turn what God is saying to you into action steps, consider using the Think It Over section on the back.