

Small Group Guide

SINGLENESS AND THE NEXT GENERATION

The Church at Brook Hills

Dr. David Platt

June 12, 2011

1 Corinthians 7

This guide is a tool to help you lead your group into spiritual transformation. Use it as a resource to lead your group in discovering, owning, and applying the truths of God's Word. There may be aspects 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 an aspect of their relationship with God. Your role is to help facilitate this encounter with God in His Word through His Body, not just to complete the guide. Use this as a flexible teaching tool not a rigid group task list.

Relate . . .

Begin your group time by engaging in relational conversations and prayer that may include the following elements:

Welcome—a simple, brief time to greet one another (especially new friends), enjoy refreshments, and make announcements.

Review—a time to review the truths discussed last week and report on how members have had success or frustrations in applying those truths during the week. The leader will want to provide encouragement and shepherding during this time. Periodically, the leader will also want to review the gospel and allow members to share reports about opportunities they've had to share the gospel. Occasionally, the leader will want to revisit the vision for the group and discuss ways to accomplish that vision better.

Prayer—a time of general prayer with the whole group praying for struggles regarding the application of truths, for those with whom the group is sharing the gospel, and for understanding of today's truths.

Reflect . . .

Use the following summary and questions to review this week's message and reflect on its implications in our lives:

Sermon Outline

SINGLENESS AND THE NEXT GENERATION

1 Corinthians 7

Four Foundations for Biblical Singleness...

- Both singleness and marriage are _____ good _____.
 - Biblically, marriage is _____ expected _____.
 - Biblically, singleness is _____ exceptional _____.
- Both singleness and marriage portray the _____ gospel _____.
 - Marriage portrays...
 - Christ's sacrificial love for the church.
 - The church's submissive obedience to Christ.
 - Singleness portrays...
 - The Christian's ultimate _____ identity _____ in Christ.
 - The Christian's eternal _____ identification _____ with the church.
 - In the past (old covenant), singleness was _____ avoided _____ by most.
 - In the present (new covenant), singleness is _____ advantageous _____ for many.
 - In the future (new creation), singleness will be _____ applied _____ to all.
- Both singleness and marriage are God's _____ gifts _____.
 - Contentment is deep trust in the _____ sovereignty _____ of God.
 - Contentment is deep enjoyment of the _____ grace _____ of God.
- Both singleness and marriage are for God's _____ glory _____.

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- Singleness has a purpose we must be careful not to _____ waste _____.

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...
 - To use God's _____ good gift _____ for God's _____ great glory _____ in the next generation and among all nations.

Message Summary

Today's message explores both the foundations and delights of biblical singleness. Using 1 Corinthians 7 as a starting point, Dr. Platt led the congregation through the views of singleness and marriage in Genesis, Deuteronomy, Isaiah, Matthew, and 1 Corinthians. The thought that both singleness and marriage are good was not a common view in Corinth or in the Old Testament; rather, it was thought that marriage and the children created within marriage signified blessing. The Apostle Paul, however, taught that marriage is expected, and singleness is exceptional. Both marriage and singleness portray the gospel. Marriage displays Christ's sacrificial love for the Church and her subsequent submissiveness. Singleness reveals that a Christian's identity is in Christ, not another human, and it portrays that a Christian's eternal identification is with the Church. While in the Old Covenant singleness was avoided, in the New Covenant, singleness has advantages for the spread of the gospel. In Christ, the Kingdom multiplies not through physical birth but through new, spiritual birth. Ultimately, in the New Kingdom, singleness will be applied to all. Singleness and marriage are both gifts from God intended to bring Him glory.

Next, Dr. Platt suggested four reasons to delight in singleness. First, we must consider the times. The Corinthians were facing severe persecution and lived in a culture full of sexual perversion (1 Cor. 7:26), as are we, so we must remember that whether married or single, we look forward to the eternal hope we have in Christ. Second, advancing the Kingdom is the mission we are on, and we are living for an eternal heritage that comes through making disciples—not merely a physical heritage that comes from having children. Third, as singles we are less distracted in our affections, though we must guard against unholy sexual and selfish desires. Finally, we delight in singleness because we want a devotion to Christ that is completely undivided—to use the good gift of singleness to bring glory to God everywhere.

Discuss

Use the following questions to review the Head (What does God want me to know?), Heart (What does God want me to value?), and Hands (What does God want me to do?) aspects of the message.

- Did today's message change your views of singleness? If so, how?
- How would you describe singleness through the eyes of our culture?
- How does viewing singleness as a display of the gospel—our ultimate identity in Christ and identification with the Church—change the way you value singleness?
- What does it mean to delight in singleness?
- How can singleness be advantageous over marriage in many contexts?
- Consider Isaiah 54:1 and 56:4-5, and Matthew 19:10-12. Using these verses, describe God's design for singleness.

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- What does it mean to squander the gift of singleness?
- If you are single, how is your singleness helping you in your mission to spread the gospel?
- What practical steps can you take to guard your affection for Christ against unholy sexual desires and unholy selfish desires? How does a right view of Christ change what you value and desire?
- How does the truth that we are living for an eternal heritage or everlasting name (Isa. 56:5) encourage you to pour yourself into the next generation?

Respond . . .

Encourage your group to break out into smaller, same-gender groups where they will respond to the truths of the message. These groups will share with one another based on the following questions and then close in prayer:

- What are some of the main truths that God wants you to know from the message?
- How do your thoughts need to adjust to align with these truths?
- According to the truths from the message, what does God want you to value?
- How do your values need to change to align with His values?
- What actions does God want you to take according to the truths of this message?
- What is an action that you can start to implement today or tomorrow?

Close this time by praying for each other, specifically for strength in the application of these truths and for the lost people with whom you are seeking to share the gospel.

Weekly Prayer Focus . . . (from the worship guide)

- **Lives and Church:** *Pray that singles throughout our church would sincerely delight in their singleness and understand it as a good gift from God that is to be used for His glory.*
- **Local:** *This week we are praying for Northstar Youth Ministries. We are also praying for Hopewell Missionary Baptist Church, Timothy J. Woods, Pastor.*
- **Global:** *This week we are praying for our Central Asia Church Planters. We are also praying for Brook Hills teams in Atlanta and Peru.*