

**Sermon – Singleness: 1 Corinthians 7:17-40**  
**Relationships Series Part Three – Bruce Stanley**  
[www.waitara.anglican.asn.au](http://www.waitara.anglican.asn.au)

**\* 1. A Basic Need vv36-38**

A Lonely Single Mum writes: "I recently gave birth to my first my child, a beautiful baby boy. I am very happy most of the time, but recently I have found that I am pretty lonely and scared. My husband up and left a few months ago, and didn't even come to see his baby be born. Now it's up to me to raise this child on my own. ... I don't know if I have the strength needed to keep on going sometimes. Can anyone help me or offer some support?" (Mary, lonely, single mom) [http://www.babycrowd.com/forums/single\\_parents/Lonely\\_single\\_mom/](http://www.babycrowd.com/forums/single_parents/Lonely_single_mom/)

From Lonely single male, 31, in Dublin: "Hello Lonely single male here in search of someone special. I have only been in love once in my life, and I lost her to cancer. I have been keeping myself busy by working all the time and what I really wanted was someone to stop me from being lonely, someone kind and caring, who might be lonely as well."  
<http://sfbay.craigslist.org/eby/m4w/396888053.html>

**\* 1. A Basic Need**

Today's topic is singleness. But it's about more than just singleness. It's about the basic need for relationships. It's about each one of us having the relationships we need to survive in this world. Today, I want us to think about ourselves and ALL the people around us in life. And I want us to ask these questions: "Do the people around me have the relationships they need to survive? And do *I* have relationships *I* need to survive?"

**2. "What relationships do we *need*?" vv17-28, 32-35**

So we're going to begin by simply asking that question from God's Word:

"What sort of relationships do we *need*?" For example, Do people *need* to get married? Or do people *need* to have children? What do we NEED to survive?

\* In 1211, King Frederick II, carried out a rather cruel and unusual experiment. He wanted to know what man's original language was: Hebrew, Greek, or Latin? So he took some new born children and isolated them from the sound of the human voice. He thought that if they never heard a human voice, they would eventually speak the *natural* tongue of man. He gathered some carers for the children who were sworn to absolute silence as they raised them. The infants never heard a word – not a sound from a human voice. Within several months they all died.

We need relationships to survive. Families, marriage, friendships and even neighbours are an important part of our humanity. Without these relationships, life can be not only be difficult, it can be impossible. But does everyone need marriage? Does everyone need children? Or do we simply need human contact?

Well the first thing to say is from 1 Corinthians 7:17-28: Paul says "it's OK to stay as you are!" God doesn't **command** us to be married or single, which is why Paul says in verse 25:

\* *"I have no command of the Lord, but I give my opinion as one who by the Lord's mercy is trustworthy."*

Paul gives us a commonsense answer to the question of whether to marry or not. And he says it's OK to do either! In 7:7 – Paul says that some people have the **gift** of not needing to marry. Marriage is good. But it's great if you don't feel the *need* to get married, because it means that you can be more devoted to God's work. Have a look at 1 Corinthians 7:32 –

*\* “I want you to be free from anxieties. The unmarried man is anxious about the affairs of the **Lord**, how to please the **Lord**; but the married man is anxious about the affairs of the **world**, how to please his **wife**, and his interests are divided.”*

When you're married, you have responsibilities. Responsibilities to your spouse, and perhaps children, and this will mean that you can't spend as much time serving God, or doing other gospel work. On the other hand, a **single** person doesn't have the worries of a spouse or children. So they can be more fully devoted to serving God.

But if you are a person who can't stand to be single, get married. It's good for you to marry. As Paul says in verse 9:

*\* “...it is better to marry than to burn with passion.”*

So we shouldn't be pushing people into marriage. And the same principle applies for having children. We shouldn't push people into having children. It's not a **COMMAND** of God's to have children. Pushing people into that sort of commitment is not helpful. They may be of more service to God without children.

\* **But** there is of course the other issue. What about a single person who **wants** to be married but can't find a partner? What about a person who **needs** a marriage relationship but is unable to find one? Or what about the couple who are married and **want** to have children but can't? What about people who **WANT** these relationships but are **UNABLE** to have them? Or have had these relationships but have lost them.

We can put a lot of pressure on people to get married, and then put more pressure on them to have children. But even if someone **WANTS** to get married, or even if someone **WANTS** to have children, it's not always **possible**. People ask questions like “When are you going to get married?” Or “When are you guys having children?” These questions can be the most hurtful to a single person who is unable to find a partner, or to a couple who are unable to conceive, or to a person who is divorced or widowed.

We must be aware of the relationship pressures we can place on people. What we need to be able to do as a church, is provide meaningful and appropriate relationships for all people, married or single, with or without kids. Relationships which help us to grow in our faith. When a person is unable to find a marriage partner, or a couple is unable to have children, or for those in unhappy marriages, or widowers, or single parents, whatever the situation, the church family should be working to **recognise those needs**, and provide supportive and appropriate relationships wherever possible. And by appropriate I mean it's **NOT** appropriate for a married man to develop a deep personal relationship with a single mum to help her out. It's appropriate for another woman to be caring for her. But we need to understand the needs of those around us.

The depth of our relationships determines the effectiveness of our relationships. If we **know** each other well, we will be able to **provide** for each other well. We will **know** when someone has needs. We will be able to share with others when **we** have needs. That's how a functional family works.

### **3. “TIME IS SHORT!” vv29-31**

#### **III - Drama – “Who wants to be a millionaire?” (just first slide?)**

Essentially this game is about the million dollars. But not many people focus on that. People just want to get the \$32,000 or even the \$16,000. They lose sight of the million. The real prize. People often think that marriage or children is the ultimate million dollar prize that everyone should be happy with. But it's not. Marriage and children are great things.

They're a great blessing from the Lord. But they are not the ultimate prize. They are not the million dollars.

\* **Matthew 22:30** says that there is no marriage in heaven and there is no one given in marriage. The marriage relationship is only part of **this** world. But there is much more to life than this world. And verse 29 really summarises this and everything we have talked about with relationships over the past three weeks:

\* *"What I mean brothers is that the time is short. From now on those who have wives should live as though they had none; those 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; those who use the things of the world, as if not engrossed in them. For the world in its present form is passing away."*

\* **Time is short.** In the middle of all of this, Paul is reminding us that we are a part of something bigger – an eternal relationship. Time is short. This world is passing away and something much more important is coming. The relationship we have with God through Jesus is **beyond** this world. **That's** the million dollar prize. And that relationship came at a price. In verse 23, Paul says: *"You were bought at a price; do not become slaves of men."*

We **belong** to Christ first of all. We are not to be slaves to men – slaves to marriage, or slaves to children, slaves to fashion, or slaves to our jobs. We are slaves to Christ. We **belong** to Jesus and serve Jesus above all others. Above our parents, above our children, above our spouse, above our friends.

In some cultures, when you're married, there's a dowry paid to the husband for taking the wife. There's a **price paid** for that relationship. Sometimes money. Sometimes a cow or a sheep or two. Apparently, in the Western world, it's proper for the **husband** to pay the price and buy his future wife an engagement ring that costs about 3 months salary. I was still at university when I married Heather. Which means her ring should have cost me about \$12.50. But there is a greater cost in marriage. The cost of commitment to one another.

But the **cost for Jesus** to have a relationship with us, was his blood. It cost him his life on the cross. It's easy to forget that simple thing as a Christian.

\* On the cross Jesus says to us: **"You are worth dying for."** Above all else, we are children of God. Time is short because we have a future in heaven, and that future, our relationship with Jesus, came at a **great price**.

I think if we're honest, we would admit that we often misplace our value of people by looking at their status in this world – if they're married, or have children, or have a good job, or are good looking. We can often judge their value and happiness by their worldly life. But we must work hard to see things from God's perspective. Our true value, our deepest, immeasurable value, is not whether or not we're married or have children. Or shoes on our feet or a good job. Our greatest value is seen when we look at the cross of Jesus. His life for mine. I am worth that much! (Say it softly to yourself now – I am worth that much!)

Perhaps you're single, or don't have kids, or can't have kids, or you're widowed, or a single parent, or the kids have all left home, or you're out of work. Perhaps you're in an unhappy marriage, or perhaps you think you have it all and life is good. **No matter where you stand in your relationships today**, try seeing things from God's perspective: **You are someone who is worth the life of his Son.** You are worth the blood of Jesus. **You are worth dying for.** If only we could see all human life from God's perspective and value people the way **He** does. Because God simply looks at every person that he has made and says "You are worth dying for." Let's pray.