

# 1 – “This Light and Momentary Marriage” // *First Love* // Ephesians 5:31–32

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## Easter recap:

- Last weekend, at 21 services across 7 campuses all over the Triangle, 9166 people heard the message of the gospel and 174 responded to the call to be baptized.
- For those of you who were out of town and know you want to be baptized or for those of you who were here and have been kicking yourself all week because you didn't get baptized... we're doing it again at all campuses today. Our campus teams will be following up after the message today with instructions on what to do at your campus.

## First Love Intro:

We are launching off today on a 6-week series called *First Love: Building Gospel-Centered Relationships*. The one area that provides us the most joy, or the most heartache, is relationships, whether you are single or married.

The title is *First Love*, and we'll be considering a lot about romance and marriage—but this is not exactly a marriage series. We're going to learn principles about ourselves that apply to all relationships, including marriage. Here's what I've found: **there are no married people issues; there are only people issues that get worse in marriage.** Marriage doesn't really create problems; it just reveals them. So regardless of whether you're single; single and seeking; single and content; happily married; unhappily married; single again; wanting to be single again—this series will have a lot in it for you.

- **Week 1:** We're going to ask the question, “*What are you looking for?*” when you look for love and romance, and we're going to deal with expectations for marriage and what God's plan is for singleness.
- **Week 2:** We're going to look at one, huge principle, which, if we got it—this one principle, I'm going to give you one question we could ask—which would fundamentally change all of our relationships, including marriage.
- **Week 3** will be all about principles of communication. I had dinner with one of our elders the other night...
- **Week 4:** We're going to look at conflict and forgiveness. I've got some great recent stories about how Veronica has really wronged me and how I've forgiven her that I'll share with you.
- **Week 5:** I'm going to talk about principles of decision-making in relationships.
- **Week 6:** We'll talk about building intimacy.

(I'm trying to encourage my wife to join me for a couple of these, but she's being really stubborn and hard-hearted about it. Maybe if you gave her a little encouragement she might?)

We're going to base all of our study on Ephesians 5:22–31, which is one of the richest passages in the Bible on relationships. Lot of other texts we are going to bring into our studies, but that text will be our anchor point.

- So get a Bible. (At the FTG tent: our gift to you.)
- Online helps

## Ephesians 5:31–32: *This Light and Momentary Marriage*

<sup>31</sup> “Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.” <sup>32</sup> This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church.

- Paul explains that marriage was given as a sign of something. It was not an end unto itself.
- It points to a higher reality; Christ’s relationship to his church.
- Think of it like a ray of sunshine...

*(this is pretty deep, and radical)*

### 1. Marriage is not ultimate; it is a sign and shadow of a higher reality.

It points you to the fountain of love and joy: Christ; and to eternal relationships, the church.

- Christ is the source of all love and joy—the love you were created for is not the love of another human being;
- And the church is the ultimate, eternal family. According to Scripture, relationships in Christ are more permanent, and more precious, than relationships in families.
- Will you let me blow your mind for a minute? It’s going to sound like I’m dogging on marriage, but hang with me.
  - “In the resurrection,” Jesus said, “they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven” (Matthew 22:30).
    - What me and V will be like in heaven...
  - “And when his own mother and brothers asked to see him, Jesus said, “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!’” (Matthew 12:48-49). Piper: “Jesus is turning everything around. Yes, he loved his mother and his brothers. But those are all natural and temporary relationships. His focus was on those whom he called out for himself. He was calling out a new family where single people in Christ are full-fledged family members on a par with all others, bearing fruit for God and becoming mothers and fathers of the eternal kind.”
  - “Blessed is the womb that bore you, and the breasts at which you nursed!” a woman cried out to Jesus. And he turned and said, “Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and keep it!” (Luke 11:27). The mother of God is the obedient Christian. Take a deep breath and reorder your world.
  - “Truly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or lands, for my sake and for the gospel,” Jesus said, “who will not receive a hundredfold now in this time, houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands, with persecutions, and in the age to come eternal life” (Mark 10:29-30).
  - Whether you are married or single. We must renounce the primacy of your natural relationships and follow Jesus into the fellowship of the people of God.
- (John Piper) Marriage is temporary; and it will finally give way to the relationship to which it was pointing all along: Christ and the church—the way a picture is no longer needed when you see face to face.<sup>1</sup>
- Keller: Marriage only gives you a sign and foretaste of the future kingdom of God.<sup>2</sup>

I don’t want to dismiss the importance of the sign. It’s part of the created order, and part of God’s good gifts to us. **But life goes wrong when you make the symbol ultimate.** Using what we just learned, let me give you a couple of ways you can do that.

**When your happiness and self-worth are dependent on being loved romantically.** Marriage, or good romance, becomes the one thing you feel like you could not live without.

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.desiringgod.org/resource-library/sermons/single-in-christ-a-name-better-than-sons-and-daughters>

<sup>2</sup> Tim Keller, *Meaning of Marriage*, 198.

- I've pointed out to you before that our culture idolizes romantic love. Romantic love "completes us." And many of you just thought of the heart-touching scene in Jerry Maguire where Tom Cruise looks at Renee Zellweger and says, "You complete me." That's how we see it. I am incomplete until you love me.

- You can hear it in our songs. Now when I think of illustrations of this, I think back to my high school days. I'm a child of the 80's...
  - You know our love was meant to be; the kind of love that lasts forever. And I want you here with me from tonight; until the end of time. You should know; everywhere I go; Always on my mind; in my heart; in my soul.

You're the meaning in my life; you're the inspiration. You bring feeling; to my life; you're the inspiration. Wanna have you near me; I wanna have you hear me sayin': No one needs you more than I need you.<sup>3</sup>

- "There's no love like your love... there's nowhere unless you're there, all the time, all the way... take me as I am, take my life; I would give it all, I would sacrifice; don't tell me it's not worth dyin' for; I can't help it, there's nothing I want more... you know it's true, everything I do, I do it for you."
  - I was reading an interview with Matt Dillon in which he described himself as a relationship junky, and I thought "That's pretty good." Relationship junky: you get a high off of relationships so you go from one to the next. I think Kesha has a song that literally says that: "Your love, your love, your love is my drug."
- But it doesn't work. You weren't created to be "completed" by the love of another human being; you were created for the love of Christ.
- Here's what I've told you: *Lonely, insecure, unhappy single people become lonely, insecure, unhappy married people.* They follow you to the altar, and they disappear for a little while, but they come back up.
  - Problems like loneliness, insecurity, and unhappiness are not cured by another human...
- **Gary Thomas:** "*Marriage doesn't solve emptiness; it exposes it...* If someone can't live without you, he or she will never be happy living with you either."<sup>4</sup> So, his counsel: marry someone with a solid core, who doesn't depend on you for those things.
- Put a sign up: Will not sustain the weight of your soul.

Here's a second way: **When you make marriage the measure of a significant life.**

- We have this assumption that the man or woman who does not leave a permanent family has left no real mark on the world. You guys know me, I'm into family. But according to Scripture, ultimate family is not in biology, but in the church.
- A life that does not produce biological offspring is not a failed life; a life that does not make disciples of Jesus is a failed life.
- The permanent family of God grows not by sexual propagation but by making disciples. It's great when your natural family are also part of the permanent, eternal family, and they are my first mission field. But my earthly family is just temporary. The church is eternal.
- You would never say to someone, in an ultimate sense, "You complete me." No, Christ and the church complete you. Marriage is just a temporary shadow, a light and momentary sign, of ultimate realities.

*Let's leave there and go to 1 Cor 7. Paul uses this concept to counsel his church in Corinth, which seems to have had a lot of single people in it.*

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<sup>3</sup> Peter Cetera.

<sup>4</sup> *Sacred Search*, 209.

## 1 Corinthians 7:1–40

**1 Cor 7:7** *I wish that all were as I myself am. (single) But each has his own gift from God, one of one kind and one of another.*

### 2. Singleness is not an inferior state to marriage.

- Single people get a raw deal sometimes. Married people are always trying to fix them up as if there was something wrong with them. My best friend Bruce says he got so sick of the little old ladies at his old church would say to him at each wedding, “Don’t worry. You’re next.” He finally got them to shut up by saying to them at funerals, “You’re next.”
- Paul says that there are some real privileges to being single.
  - 60% of the adults listening to me right now are single, not counting kids or high school students.
  - Our country has gone through a pretty dramatic shift. In America nearly half of all adults are single. That number has more than tripled in the last generation.<sup>5</sup> The percentage of singles is even higher for Raleigh-Durham. RDU has been ranked consistently in the top 10 places in the country for young professionals to live—young, upwardly mobile people move here to try to get a good start-up job in the tech industry. These single young people are waiting longer to get married now. The average age people get married has gone up almost 4 years for my generation.
  - And there are reasons that can be bad—let’s face it: most singles are not remaining single so they can focus on Bible memorization and mission trips, but because they meet their sexual needs outside of marriage—so the general postponement of marriage in our culture is not usually a good thing—but, still, according to Paul, singleness is a gift God gives to some—it might be a temporary thing, while God is doing some things in and through you, or it might be a permanent calling while you are here on earth.

Let us never forget, Christianity’s founder, Jesus, and lead theologian, St. Paul, were both single their entire lives.<sup>6</sup>

- Every time you pray you are praying to a 33-year-old single adult.

A lot of times we talk about singleness as if marriage was the superior state and if you’re single it’s because you’re not ready for marriage yet.

So we say things like:

- “As soon as you’re satisfied in God alone, he’ll bring someone special into your life.” As if we earn God’s blessings our earned by our contentment.
- “You’re too picky.” As though God is frustrated by our narrow parameters and needs us to broaden them so he can bless us. (for some of you, this is true, but that’s not why you are single).
- “Before you can marry someone wonderful, you must become someone wonderful.” As though God grants marriage as a second blessing to the satisfactorily sanctified.

Tim Keller says, “Under all these statements is the premise that a single life is (a 2<sup>nd</sup> class life) a state of deprivation for people not yet fully formed for marriage.”<sup>7</sup>

<sup>5</sup> David Jeremiah, *Authentic Christianity* 2, 90.

<sup>6</sup> Tim Keller, *Meaning of Marriage*, 195.

But that's not true. Marriage is not ultimate.

**29** *The appointed time has grown very short. From now on, let those who have wives live as though they had none...* What does this mean? This is like the favorite verse of people going to Vegas: "Let those who have wives live as though they had none!" Go home and act like I'm not married? This would contradict everything else Paul has said! **30** *For the present form of this world is passing away.* This world is not ultimate and it's not permanent.

Christ and the church are permanent. Our marriages and family are only light and momentary.

Paige Benton Brown: "I am not single because I am too spiritually unstable to possibly deserve a husband, nor because I am too spiritually mature to possibly need one. I am single because God is so abundantly good to me, because this is his best for me."<sup>8</sup>

Which leads me to #3...

### 3. Marriage and singleness are temporary gifts God uses for the fulfillment of his purposes

Vs. 7: Singleness is a "gift." The word he uses there for "gift" is *charisma* which is literally "spiritual gift," or a "spiritual empowerment" that God gives you for the accomplishing of his purposes in your life. It might be temporary: an empowerment for a specific time for some God's purposes in your life. For others, it might be a permanent life calling. It's a charisma: a spiritual empowerment for God's purposes in and through you.

#### ***Singleness is a gift:***

- God might have a special assignment for you that you can only accomplish if you are single.
- Or you need to complete something (like your education or a military assignment) and you can't do it when you're married.
- Or there maybe some things he can only teach you when you're single.

#### ***Marriage is also a gift*** God gives to some.

- I used to read Paul's words in vs. 7, "I wish you all were like I am, because singleness frees you up for a lot more in the kingdom of God," and assume that meant that singleness was always superior to marriage, singleness was varsity and being married makes you JV, and if you really loved Jesus you wouldn't want to get married. So I'd feel guilty asking for a wife.
- But that's not true either. See the rest of the verse? **"But each has his own gift from God, one of one kind and one of another."** 1 Cor 7:7
- Remember it was God who said, "It is not good that man be alone"—Marriage was a gift he came up to help the man.
  - "It is not good that man should be alone." Why? Because men wear black pants and white socks. They don't understand the need for furniture. Most guys, their dream pad includes a waterbed, a black leather couch and a TV, and that's it.
  - When a guy moves, it takes one buddy, a Ford Mustang and 15 minutes. So God made woman to come along and fix all that.
- On a more serious note, marriage is a gift that teaches you about the love of God.
  - It's a ray of the sun. It is how God meets some of your desires for companionship, affection, affirmation, and security. My plaque

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<sup>7</sup> Tim Keller, *Meaning of Marriage*, 196–97.

<sup>8</sup> Paige Benton Brown, "Singled out by God for Good," quoted in Tim Keller, *The Meaning of Marriage*, 197.

- And, as I'll explain more, it has taught me more about how to love like God loves: my sin, my need of grace, how to show grace.
- And, of course, it's the arena he's created for the enjoyment of sexual intimacy and the propagation of the human race.

**7:2** *Because of the temptation to sexual immorality, each man should have his own wife and each woman her own husband.*

#### 4. Both singleness and marriage have their advantages and drawbacks.

Marriage is wonderful. But it has drawbacks.

Paul says in vs. **33** *But the married man is anxious about worldly things, how to please his wife, 34 and his interests are divided.*

- **Single guys:** Everything changes when you get married.
  - **Your house** changes. As I mentioned before, you can't move everything you own in the trunk of a car. It **takes a whole car now just to move the pillows** that sit on top of my bed. Your house gets filled with all these products when you get married—facial products, scented products, hair products. **My bathroom used to have just a bar of soap in it:** I washed everything with it—my face, my hair, my body, floors, scrubbed the toilet with it.
  - **Your dress:** When I first started to date, I would go shopping and Veronica would give her opinions on what I bought. Then she and I would go shopping and I would give her my opinions about what she should buy for me to wear with my money, of course. Now it just shows up in my closet and I don't get an opinion. Veronica has told her friends that if they see me by myself at the mall to call her immediately, **CODE RED.**
  - **Your schedule:** When you're single you're running out all the time to see movies, go hiking, play golf, go on road trips. Changes when you get married. People ask me, "What are your hobbies?" I say, "Do you mean, What did they used to be?" I used to go rock climbing and skiing all the time. Now I spend most of my time in **the kiddie section of the pool.** I don't go rock climbing, play golf, see movies, ski... some of you guys are like, "Well, I'm married and I still do all that stuff." That might be because you're a bad husband.
    - (I don't mean you can't still do some of your hobbies. I do. I have some guy time. But for the most part I am a married dude with 4 kids. What are your hobbies? Kharis, Allie, Ryah, and Adon. Do you have pets? Nope, I have kids. I want no more living beings depending on me right now.)
  - **What you do with your momey.** If you're getting married for sex, let me warn you, it's expensive. I took the amount that my family adds to my monthly budget, and divided it by the number of times the average couple has sex, and figured out, conservatively speaking, if I got married for sex, each encounter is costing me close to \$600.
- So a guy says, "I want to get married." My response is, "Do you really?" Are you ready for your life to change *that much*?
- And to the women, Verse **34** says, **34 ...And the unmarried or betrothed woman is anxious about the things of the Lord, how to be holy in body and spirit. But the married woman is anxious about worldly things, how to please her husband.** You say you want to marry a man? Here's my question for you:
  - Do you know what men smell like on a regular basis?
  - Do you know what kind of food he's going to want you to fix him? A lot of women are naturally vegetarians, you eat stir-fry and noodles and things with chopsticks. Guys don't use chopsticks because there's simply no way to get the amount of food they require into their mouths with a couple of oversize toothpicks. You ready for that?

- If you get married and have kids, it's going to affect your career. For many of you, it will stop it altogether.
- The freedom of a single to pursue certain things, both recreational and career-wise, is *astounding*.
- **Now, I don't want to take away from being married.** Marriage is my gift. I wouldn't be *half* the man I am or minister I am if I wasn't a husband or a father. The things that God does in my life through those roles are wonderful. God has taught me far more about him through my wife and my kids than I learned at seminary.

## 5. The answer to "Should I get married?" is (a) "Do I have the gift?"

How do you know?

### 9 For it is better to marry than to be aflame with passion.

- *In other words, if you're not good at virginity, then you should work toward getting married. If you're "aflame with passion": Guy says: "Man, she is hot." Yes, she is hot. That heat you feel comes from being aflame with passion. That's a biblical concept. But if you touch her sexually outside of marriage, you will burn in hell for your sin, and it is hotter there. So, get married so you don't live a life of sin.*<sup>9</sup>
- If you worry about being single all the time, if you think there's no way that singleness could ever be a "gift" but only a curse, then you probably don't have that gift.
- Ask God for the gift of a spouse so that you can have an easier time being holy.

Paul, who had the gift of marriage, describes himself like this:

### 37 But whoever is firmly established in his heart, being under no necessity but having his desire under control, ...he will do well.

- Is that you? Are you content being single? You've probably got the gift of singleness, at least for the time being, and you should take advantage of that.

## 5. ...and (b) "Is it time?"

Sometimes you may feel like you want to get married but it evidently is not God's will because the right person is not in your life or circumstances dictate that it's not the right time to get married.

Look at what Paul says in vs. 26: **26 I think that in view of the present distress it is good for a person to remain as he is.**

- Context: Paul is writing in a particular era of history where persecution against Christians is going to reach a fever pitch. Families are being torn apart, sold into slavery, butchered in the arenas. Plus, AD 51, when Paul wrote this letter, there is a massive famine in the area! It is difficult enough to go through persecution as a single person, but when you're married, your worldly troubles multiply! Paul's conclusion: "During this time, if you're not married, probably better to just remain single."

OK, so that was then. But we are not in a particularly persecuted era of history, at least not compared to them. So what does it mean for us?

- I believe Paul would encourage marriage in this context more. *But, what it does mean is that there can be a "present" situation in your life that makes it more advantageous for you to wait.*
- Already gave you some examples:
  - Education.
  - Trying to get established in your career.
  - Or maybe healing from something in your life.

<sup>9</sup> Mark Driscoll.

- Or a season in which you learn to depend on God more. Make him your identity and comfort.
- Or a call to a mission assignment.

These things could be temporary stages, or they could be more permanent. There are times when marriage would hinder what God wants to do in your life. If that is the case, take advantage of this chapter of your life! Don't look at it as a curse!

Which leads me to #6...

## 6. Don't squander one blessing by coveting another one

- I think of it like **David being in the pasture** (called to be king; back in the pasture). Some of you feel "called to be married" but you feel like you are in a pasture of singleness. Good news: some of God's best blessings come in the pasture. (David: learned faithfulness; courage; to worship).
- **If you're single, don't sit around and wonder, "When is God going to bless me?"** He *is* blessing you. This is part of the blessing. It's your pasture time. He's giving you an opportunity to focus on some things at this time that married people cannot focus on. David would never have been the king he was; the one after God's own heart, without that pasture time.
  - You don't have to wait to start your life. Get going with what God is doing. If you're called to be single for a time, he'll enable you to be single for that time.
- **And, when and if God does bring along that special person,** he'll likely do it not because you obsessed about it, but because you focused your attention on what God was doing and got busy doing it!
  - **Illus.** Tommy Nelson's analogy: You get going toward God's goal, and then you look over and there's someone running as fast as you: "Hi there. Where you going? There. Me too! Want to go together?"
  - **Get on the highway of God's will for your life; don't putz around in the cul de sac of desperation.**
  - **Matthew 6:33**, "Seek first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness, and *all* these things will be added to you." In context, "all" would include marriage.

## 7. When it's time, don't wait!

I love what it says in vs. **36** *If anyone thinks that he is not behaving properly toward his betrothed, if his passions are strong, and it has to be, let him do as he wishes: let them marry—it is no sin.*

- When it is time, and you both have the gift, marry her. Quit waiting around. Here's the key: (vs. 36) *Let him do as he wishes...* vs. 37 uses the phrase, "*firmly established in his heart.*" If you're single, do that, if you're supposed to be married, do that.

**I have a special word of God for some you single guys: *Make up your mind.***

- Don't string her along. Don't keep a ring on her finger with an elusive promise of marriage way out there.
- And show some confidence. Don't do the whole "sneak-a-date" thing.
  - You know, ***guys who figure out how, functionally, to get dates with girls without ever having to ask them out.***
  - They always arrange mysterious ways for the two of you to be together. "*Oh, look, we're here together again.*" **'sneak-a-date.'** **'Friend-ationship.'**
  - ***Make up your mind. Go after her.*** Put up your Star Trek outfits. Get a shirt with buttons. Bathe. Shave. Floss. Get someone to show you how to put protect in your hair. Talk to her, deep, confident, dudely voice, "*Hello, daughter of Eve.*" She loves and is attracted to confidence. She doesn't want to date the Star Trek guy, the T-shirt guy, the jersey guy, the "I have the same haircut I've had since I was a kid" guy, or the "I have no confidence but I can say my name in belches" guy.



- **Guys, if it's not time to get married**, as in, you don't have a job, then quit flirting with her, quit leading her on, and get on with what God is doing in your singleness. Girls, you too—don't lead the guy on.
- Dating is a road that leads to marriage, and if you're not ready for the destination, don't get on the road!
- The point: **When it's time to wait on God**—wait. **When it's time to act**, go boldly into the land. Be strong and courageous.
- *Good things come to them that wait, but not to those who hesitate; so hurry up, and wait upon the Lord!*
- (Guys, don't be creepy. If she says 'no,' then leave her alone and don't pull the God card or this sermon on her).

## 8. Reject the 'E-harmony' myth

Nothing wrong with E-harmony. But the myth is that if you can just find the perfect person you'll have the perfect marriage. And so you're almost paralyzed trying to find Mr. Perfect.

That's because we believe in what Tim Keller calls '*apocalyptic romance*.' Every romantic movie has the same plot: The life story begins just as two people are about to meet each other, and they realize everything in their lives have been leading up to this point. They exchange some witty banter, and then have a Disney-esque romantic affair where they find **true love**, and once they do the story fades out. And then if there is a movie sequel that features the two of them it's boring. The message: what matters in life is finding romance. Everything else is prologue and postlogue.<sup>10</sup>

There is no perfect person. If you think you've found one, check their hand and unless it's nail-scarred that is just an illusion. This person was so bad that Jesus had to die for them. You think that's going to cause some problems in marriage? If it was bad enough for Jesus to die for, it's probably going to cause you some irritation.

Here's the point: because you idolize marriage (you believe in apocalyptic romance) you're trying to find the perfect person, terrified you'll marry the wrong one.

### Give you something that will help your marriage:

- **"You always marry the wrong person."** Some of you are married are convinced you married the wrong person. Of course you did.
  - In fact, my wife says she's been married to about 4 J.D's throughout our 13 years of marriage. I change. If you marry the right person, they'll likely change, and you will, and then they'll be the wrong person.
- **The point of marriage is not to make you happy by finding perfect romance, but holy by teaching you to love like Jesus.**
  - Marriage gives you a taste of heavenly love, but it's just a taste. And God's bigger purpose is to teach you to love with patience and grace like he does.
  - **"The point of marriage is to learn to wash the feet of another imperfect sinner."** Elyse Fitzpatrick

## 9. Never 'settle.'

- **Vs. 39** tells you to marry "only in the Lord."
- Never marry an unbeliever or someone who is not walking strongly in Jesus.
- Around 25 girls freak out... Any married person will tell you that it is more miserable to be married to the wrong person than to be single.

<sup>10</sup> Keller, *Meaning of Marriage*, 197.

- Realize that God gives his best to those who leave the choice to him and get busy pursuing what God has for you in this season.

### Conclusion:

Let me bring this back around to where we started. **Marriage is light and momentary. Christ and the church are eternal.**

*Let me close with a word by...*

### John Piper to singles:

God promises you blessings in the age to come that are better than the blessings of marriage and children.

I am not sentimentalizing singleness to make the unmarried feel good. I am declaring the temporary and secondary nature of marriage and family over against the eternal and primary nature of the church. Marriage and family are temporary for this age; the church is forever.

I am declaring the radical biblical truth that being in a human family is no sign of eternal blessing, but being in God's family means being eternally blessed. Relationships based on family are temporary. Relationships based on union with Christ are eternal. Marriage is a temporary institution, but what it stands for lasts forever.

(So) renounce the primacy of your natural relationships and follow Jesus into the fellowship of the people of God.

...I say it again to all singles in Christ: God promises you blessings in the age to come that are better than the blessings of marriage and children. ...Marriage is temporary, and finally gives way to the relationship to which it was pointing all along: Christ and the church—the way a picture is no longer needed when you see face to face...<sup>11</sup>

**Singles:** activity on our Equip site.

**Married:** a date idea.

Be back for the next 6 weeks—it's going to be fun!

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<sup>11</sup> <http://www.desiringgod.org/resource-library/sermons/single-in-christ-a-name-better-than-sons-and-daughters>

## Bullpen:

### 9. Don't fall for the E-harmony myth

Nothing wrong with E-harmony. But the myth is that if you can just find the perfect person you'll have the perfect marriage.

That is a myth for two reasons:

We believe in 'apocalyptic romance.' The life story begins just as two people are about to meet each other, and they realize everything in their lives have been leading up to this point. They exchange some witty banter, and then have a Disney-esque romantic affair where they find True Love, and once they do the story fades out. And then if there is a movie sequel that features the two of them it's boring. The message: what matters in life is finding romance. Everything else is prologue and postlogue.<sup>12</sup>

You never marry the "right person."

- Veronica says she's been married to about 5 J.D's throughout her life.
- They change.
- "You always marry the wrong person."
- This gets at the very mission of marriage: Marriage is 2 imperfect sinners who are "wrong" for each other learning to love each other like Christ loved us, imperfect sinners.
- "Marriage is learning to wash the feet of another imperfect sinner." Elyse Fitzpatrick.
- Don't think you can change them! Progression → "I can change them.?" → I haven't changed them but I can't leave them now. They'll change when we're married." Then, I must leave them. Don't give me your anecdotal evidence. Everybody knows one story of some girl whom God used to change her husband. The reason everybody knows about these stories is because they are so exceptional. It's like pointing to the one lottery winner as a good investment of your money.
- God gives His best to those who leave the choice to him.

### (9) Never despair

God can use lots of emotions. Fear. Anger. Despair is NEVER from God.

- [On celibacy notes](#) (God's purpose in marriage is to sanctify you)
  - Western culture dating is a step above used car sales. U don't want them to see real u, u want them to buy. In dating, Guys will go shopping and say, I would *love* to go to 12 more stores to look for shoes u have in your head even though you can't describe them and probably don't exist. 6 mos into marriage, You say, your not the man I married. Yes it is. The man u dated was a fake. Girls get into sports. They reveal their fakeness by saying, my their uniforms r cute. Guys never think that. If they did, scary. A lot of married live is really self love. Attraction is not a strong enough force nu wake up next to them. They have robins nest hair. Zoo breath. My wife takes 1 shower a week. Salvation is Jesus reaching into my world and rescuing me from me. Paul Tripp
  - Is she "the one"? is a very destructive question... it causes you to wait around and do nothing, and messes up God's plan in other ways. We need to encourage guys to quit being wimps and just ask the girl! (Just kiss the girl!) p. 109–111 Kevin DeYoung, *Just Do Something*

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<sup>12</sup> Keller, 197.

- Single - balance of utilitarian and person you love. Need a balance. Piper: light and momentary marriage. We're not Mormons, marrying for eternity
- Some of you freeze, you're too picky, in dating because it's too important to you. Take time to choose the right person, but this is not eternal life.
- *C.S. Lewis* "Most people, if they have really learned to look into their own hearts, would know that they do want, and want acutely, something that cannot be had in this world. There are all sorts of things in this world that offer to give it to you, but they never quite keep their promise. The longings which arise in us when we first fall in love, or first think of some foreign country, or first take up some subject that excites us, are longings which no marriage, no travel, no learning, can really satisfy. I am not now speaking of what would be ordinarily called unsuccessful marriages, or holidays, or learned careers. I am speaking of the best possible ones. There was something we have grasped at, in that first moment of longing, which just fades away in the reality. I think everyone knows what I mean. The wife may be a good wife, and the hotels and scenery may have been excellent, and chemistry may be a very interesting job: but something has evaded us."
- **E-harmony:** "most important part of falling in love is getting to know someone deeply." E-harmony promises that you can get to know someone deeply through their surveys. Everyone has this desire to be known and loved.
  - We want to be known and loved. **Loved but not known** is shallow sentiment. **Known but not loved is rejection.**
  - E-harmony can't give that. Problem is the more Veronica gets to know me, the more reason there is to not love me.
  - My soul longs to be known and loved. Enter Jesus Christ. Paul in the book of Corinthians says, (ch 13, the love chapter), that we will see face to face and we will know as we are known. The Hebrew/Greek concept of know is know intimately and loved.
  - He knew all of us. Every part. The hidden, nasty, dirty, hurt, broken parts. And He loved us anyway. He came to earth to take upon Himself our deserved singleness, and "the face of God turned away from Him," for us. He was ultimately the only single man to ever live. God turned His face away from Him so I could be known and loved by God!
  - This is what my soul thirsts for. And when I realize that, I can love from fullness and security. **Lifesaver. You're not ready to be married until you're ready to be single, and have found your life in God.**

Our title is "First Love." And the idea is that our relationship with others, particularly our spouse, is a window into our relationship with God. It shows us whether we've let other things take the place of him and whether we've learned to love like he loves.

- I'm going to show you a husband who deals with anger because he feels like his wife is depriving him of the perfect family he wants, or the sex he deserves—ultimately has a God problem;
- Or how a single person who is feels paralyzed because they really want to be married doesn't have a marriage problem, they have a God problem;
- Or how a wife who is devastated because her husband is not giving to her the affirmation she needs ultimately has a God problem.

And I am going to try to show you that we learn to love *others by learning to love God first and by saturating ourselves in the truth that he first loved us.*

- Idolatry:
  - When you love something more than God (by that I mean crave, need it to be happy)

- When you trust something more than God (by that I mean this is what you need to feel secure about the future—what’s the one thing you couldn’t imagine losing, or that you’d say without that thing life would not be worth living?)
  - When you obey something more than God (and by that I mean something commands your obedience. Obtaining it is your highest priority, and if you have to bend or break the laws of God to do it you’ll do that. Or it controls your moods. If something about your marriage makes you so angry that you sin, it is an idol to you.
  - Give you an example from my life:
    - One of my many idols is the idol of control—I don’t like to have my plans for my day messed up. When Veronica does that, I get furious. Whether she intends to or not. When she comes home late and I have to watch the kids for an extra amount of time and messes up my plans, I get really mad. When she’s sick, and messes up my plans—that’s because I have a control idol.
    - Whenever something dominates your emotions, it points to an idol in your life.
    - When you feel like, I need and deserve this much affirmation; and I need this much control; and I need this much sex to be happy—and you are keeping me from those things, therefore I am furious with you—that is an idol.
  - you let a good thing become an ultimate thing.
  - When you love and trust God in the right way, marriage can be a blessing to you, but it is not the thing itself.
  - My identity, my security, is not wrapped up in what my wife says about me.
    - Guy floating in a sea...
  - I don’t need control of my life; God has control of me.
  - I don’t have to have sex for the fullness of life; God is that to me. Not saying it’s not nice when God blesses me physically with control, a wife that affirms me or a great sexual relationship, just that these things are not God to me that I love, depend on, and control my emotions more than God.
  - Make sense?
  - Jonathan Edwards: marriage is the ray, God’s love is the sun; marriage is the shadow, God’s love the substance; marriage is the stream; God’s love is the ocean.
  - My list for Veronica
- And put away all your lists. You’ve got a list a mile long of things you want her to be able to do. She’s got to be able to rock climb. She’s got to be able to play the harmonica. And she needs to be left-handed. Look, you don’t need her to rock climb. When you’ve got kids and she’s at home with the kids, you’re not going rock- climbing. You’re coming home and staying home with those kids.

What are you looking for? Finding Love/This Light and Momentary Marriage

- Ephesians 5:31–32; 1 Cor 7; Psalm 115:3–13;

See singleness notes: 1 Cor 7

- The point in marriage is loving God; the point is Christlikeness. You always marry the wrong person. You marry 5 different people by the time you are done.
- Keller chapter on singleness in *Meaning of Marriage*
- Message: New rules of love, dating, marriage: Andy Stanley
- Idolatry is substituting a gift of God for God.
  - The first marriage went bad with man idolizing woman. (John Eldredge.) First man chose woman over God. We quickly substitute the blessings of God for God, and worship the creature more than the Creator.
- The question is not if we worship, but what we worship
- We become like what we worship

- What we idolize we demonize
  - “What people revere, they resemble, either for ruin or restoration.” (from G. K. Beale). What we idolize we demonize.

The first thing Paul does is dispose of the myth that marriage is a “superior” state. ... many people then and today think that you aren’t a complete person until you got married, as if there is something fundamentally wrong with being single. Paul says:

**7:7** *I wish that all were as I myself am. But each has his own gift from God, one of one kind and one of another.*

**vs. 38** *So then he who marries his betrothed does well, and he who refrains from marriage will do even better”*

Only let each person lead the life that the Lord has assigned to him, and to which God has called him. This is my rule in all the churches.<sup>18</sup> Was anyone at the time of his call already circumcised? Let him not seek to remove the marks of circumcision. Was anyone at the time of his call uncircumcised? Let him not seek circumcision. <sup>19</sup> For neither circumcision counts for anything nor uncircumcision, but keeping the commandments of God. <sup>20</sup> Each one should remain in the condition in which he was called. <sup>21</sup> Were you a bondservant when called? Do not be concerned about it. (But if you can gain your freedom, avail yourself of the opportunity.) <sup>22</sup> For he who was called in the Lord as a bondservant is a freedman of the Lord. Likewise he who was free when called is a bondservant of Christ. <sup>23</sup> You were bought with a price; do not become bondservants of men. <sup>24</sup> So, brothers, in whatever condition each was called, there let him remain with God.