

# MAKING SENSE OF SINGLENES

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THE BIBLICAL VISION FOR CHRISTIAN SINGLES



# Introduction

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“I was never the girl who dreamed about getting married. I entered college single, and ready to take on the world. I had Christ, I was getting a good education, and I was content. Desires for a family lived somewhere out in the land of my thirties. At some point in my college years, childhood friends began getting engaged, married, and then pregnant. Very quickly, “it is not good for man to be alone” started sounding like me, too. One morning, I scrolled across a post that yet another friend had gotten engaged. She was a good friend, and I was happy for her. I started to cry. I realized, though, that the tears welling up in my eyes were not the joy that I felt for her. They were there because I wished I was posting about my engagement, and not her. In that moment, I realized that all I wanted was to be married and to start a family. The wife and mom job description was suddenly sounding better than any job my diploma could earn me. So began my battle with discontentment.”

# Preliminary Remarks

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1. Not just a message for the young

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2. Not just a message about dating

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1. Not just a message for the young
2. Not just a message about dating
3. Not just a message for singles

# 6 FEATURES OF A BIBLICAL UNDERSTANDING OF SINGLENES

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1. The Gift of Christian Singleness
2. The Advantage of Christian Singleness
3. The Finality of Christian Singleness
4. The Family of Christian Singleness
5. The Uniqueness of Christian Singleness
6. The Completeness of Christian Singleness

# THE GIFT OF CHRISTIAN SINGLENES

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- **1 Corinthians 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.”
- “Grace Gift,” a gift that is given out of the goodness of someone’s heart

# THE GIFT OF CHRISTIAN SINGLENES

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- “Grace Gift”
  - **Acts 2:38**: “gift of the Holy Spirit.”
  - **Acts 8:20**: “gift of God.”
  - **Romans 1:11** and **1 Peter 4:10**: “spiritual gifts”
  - **Romans 3:24**: the gift of being justified before God
  - **1 Corinthians 13:2**: the gift of prophecy
  - **Ephesians 2:8**: “For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God.”



# THE GIFT OF CHRISTIAN SINGLENES

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- “Grace Gift” has two aspects in the New Testament:
  1. Given by God sovereignly and freely

# THE GIFT OF CHRISTIAN SINGLENES

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**Elisabeth Elliot:** “Having now spent more than forty-one years single, I have learned that it is indeed a gift. Not one I would choose. Not one many women would choose. But we do not choose our gifts, remember? We are given them by a divine Giver who knows the end from the beginning, and wants above all else to give us the gift of Himself. It is within the sphere of circumstances He chooses for us — single, married, widowed — that we receive Him. It is there and nowhere else that He makes Himself known to us. It is there we are allowed to serve Him.”

# THE GIFT OF CHRISTIAN SINGLENES

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- “Grace Gift” has two aspects in the New Testament:
  1. Given by God sovereignly and freely
  2. Given by God for the building up of the body of Christ

# THE ADVANTAGE OF CHRISTIAN SINGLENES

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**1 Corinthians 7:32-35:** “The unmarried man is anxious about the things of the Lord, how to please the Lord. But the married man is anxious about worldly things, how to please his wife, and his interests are divided. 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. 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.”

# THE ADVANTAGE OF CHRISTIAN SINGLENES

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**Rhena Taylor:** “Being single has meant that I am free to take risks that I might not take were I a mother of a family dependent on me. Being single has given me freedom to move around the world without having to pack up a household first. And this freedom has brought to me moments that I would not trade for anything else this side of eternity.”

# THE ADVANTAGE OF CHRISTIAN SINGLENES

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**A single Christian woman:** “How do singles balance a career that requires more than forty hours a week plus other outside commitments with the “extraordinary opportunity for single-minded investment in ministry”? I think there will be those singles who interpret this to mean that because they are not married they are “expected” to devote every non-working hour to ministry—something not expected from those who are married...Unfortunately there are many in the church who reinforce this error in thinking. This thinking can turn into an abusive situation. Singles can be guilted and shamed into doing too much. I believe there must be a caution to singles not to become “over-invested.” Singles must protect their spiritual, physical, and emotional health as well as those who are married.”

# THE FINALITY OF CHRISTIAN SINGLENES

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- Marriage is not the final state of any human
  - **Mark 12:25:** “For when they rise from the dead, they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven.”

# THE FINALITY OF CHRISTIAN SINGLENES

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- Marriage is a picture of a greater reality
  - **Ephesians 5:31-32:** “For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and shall be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh. 32 This mystery is great; but I am speaking with reference to Christ and the church.”
- A Juxtaposition
  - The Beginning of Time ← **Verse 31**
  - Verse 32** → The End of Time
- Since the beginning, marriage has always pointed to the end



# THE FINALITY OF CHRISTIAN SINGLENES

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- The Reality behind Marriage:
  - **Revelation 19:7:** “Let us rejoice and be glad and give the glory to Him, for the marriage of the Lamb has come and His bride has made herself ready.”
- Earthly marriage is penultimate; singleness is ultimate

# THE FAMILY OF CHRISTIAN SINGLENES

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- In the Old Testament God is concerned with building his covenant people through procreation
- In the Old Covenant, God is concerned with physical procreation
  - **Genesis 2:18:** “It is not good for man to be alone.”
  - **Genesis 1:28:** “be fruitful and multiply to fill the earth.”
  - **Genesis 15:5:** “Now look toward the heavens, and count the stars, if you are able to count them.” And He said to him, “So shall your descendants be.”

# THE FAMILY OF CHRISTIAN SINGLENES

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- In the Old Covenant, people are concerned with physical procreation
  - **Genesis 18**: Sarah's barrenness
  - **1 Samuel 1**: Hannah's barrenness
  - The Law of the Levirate Marriage in **Deuteronomy 25:6**: "so that his name will not be blotted out from Israel."
  - **Ruth 4:10**: "in order to raise up the name of the deceased on his inheritance."

# THE FAMILY OF CHRISTIAN SINGLENES

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- **Isaiah 56:4-5:** “Thus says the Lord: “To the eunuchs who keep my Sabbaths, who choose the things that please me and hold fast my covenant, I will give in my house and within my walls a monument and a name better than sons and daughters; I will give them an everlasting name that shall not be cut off.”
- **Isaiah 54:1:** “Shout for joy, O barren one, you who have borne no *child*; Break forth into joyful shouting and cry aloud, you who have not travailed; For the sons of the desolate one *will be* more numerous than the sons of the married woman,” says the LORD.

# THE FAMILY OF CHRISTIAN SINGLENESS

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- **Isaiah 53:10:** Yet it was the will of the LORD to crush him; he has put him to grief; when his soul makes an offering for guilt, he shall see his offspring.”

# THE FAMILY OF CHRISTIAN SINGLENES

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- In the New Covenant, the death and the resurrection of Christ creates spiritual offspring for God
  - **Isaiah 8:18 (quoted again in Hebrews 2:13):** “Behold, I and the children whom the LORD has given me.”
  - **Galatians 3:7, 26:** “Know then that it is those of faith who are the sons of Abraham...In Christ Jesus, you are all sons of God, through faith.”
- In the New Covenant, the church is called to build the covenant people through regeneration

# THE FAMILY OF CHRISTIAN SINGLENES

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## ■ Jesus' Priority of the Spiritual Family

- **Matthew 12:48-49:** 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!’”
- **Luke 11:27-28:** While Jesus was saying these things, one of the women in the crowd raised her voice and said to Him, “Blessed is the womb that bore You and the breasts at which You nursed.” 28 But He said, “On the contrary, blessed are those who hear the word of God and observe it.”

# THE FAMILY OF CHRISTIAN SINGLENESS

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- What about the Old Testament command to be fruitful and multiply?
  - **Elisabeth Elliot**, “How may a single woman enter into the meaning of motherhood if she can have no children? She can have children! She may be a spiritual mother by the very offering of her singleness, transformed for the good of far more children than a natural mother may produce.”



# THE FAMILY OF CHRISTIAN SINGLENES

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- **Use your singleness to be spiritual fathers and mothers**
  - **1 Corinthians 4:15:** Paul says, “Though you have countless guides in Christ, you do not have many fathers. For I became your father in Christ Jesus through the gospel.”
  - **1 Thessalonians 2:7:** “We were gentle among you, like a nursing mother taking care of her own children.”

# THE UNIQUENESS OF CHRISTIAN SINGLENES

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- 2 Basic Approaches to Singleness

**Contemporary Western Culture:**

Singleness is Good

**Nonwestern Traditional Culture:**

Marriage is Good



# THE UNIQUENESS OF CHRISTIAN SINGLENES

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- 2 Basic Approaches to Singleness

**Contemporary Western Culture:**

Singleness is Good



**Religion:**

Roman Catholics

Buddhism

**Nonwestern Traditional Culture:**

Marriage is Good



**Religion:**

Judaism

Islam

# THE UNIQUENESS OF CHRISTIAN SINGLENES

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- Practical Implications
  - The Glorification of Singleness may make you overly picky
    - You are impossible to please
    - You fear marriage

# THE UNIQUENESS OF CHRISTIAN SINGLENES

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- Practical Implications
  - The Glorification of Marriage may make you not picky enough
    - You are too eager to please others
    - You fear singleness

# THE UNIQUENESS OF CHRISTIAN SINGLENES

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**Christianity:**

Marriage is Good  
Singleness is Good



**Contemporary Western Culture:**

Singleness is Good

**Nonwestern Traditional Culture:**

Marriage is Good



**Religion:**

Roman Catholics  
Buddhism

**Religion:**

Judaism  
Islam

# THE UNIQUENESS OF CHRISTIAN SINGLENES

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- Christianity is the first religion that says singleness is a viable way of life.
  - **Stanley Hauerwas:** Christianity sees “singleness as the paradigm way of life for its followers.” (i.e. Jesus and Paul)
  - **1 Timothy 5:3:** “Honor widows who are widows indeed.”
  - **1 Timothy 5:5:** “Now she who is a widow indeed and who has been left alone, has fixed her hope on God and continues in entreaties and prayers night and day.”
- Both Marriage and Singleness are good and necessary

# THE COMPLETENESS OF CHRISTIAN SINGLENES

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**Ernest Becker** on when we took God out of the picture and became atheists: “modern man edged himself into an impossible situation. He still needed to feel heroic, to know that his life mattered in the scheme of things. If he no longer had God, how was he to do this? One of the first ways that occurred to him...was the “romantic solution”: he fixed his urge to cosmic heroism onto another person in the form of a love object. The self-glorification that he needed in his innermost nature he now looked for in the love partner...After all, what is it that we want when we elevate the love partner to the position of God? We want redemption—nothing less. We want to be rid of our faults, of our feeling of nothingness. We want to be justified, to know that our creation has not been in vain. We turn to the love partner for the experience of the heroic, for perfect validation. The partner needs us to be as God. On the other hand...even the partner who plays God in the relationship cannot stand it for long...No human relationship can bear the burden of godhood.”



# THE COMPLETENESS OF CHRISTIAN SINGLENES

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- “You know what? It'd be great to have you as my boyfriend, it'd be great even to get married, but you will never be my life. Christ is my life. I will never find my worthiness and my value in you. I find it in Jesus Christ. Now I'll be able to really love you. Before I was using guys to get a sense of value, but now that I've got my value in Jesus Christ, I can stop using people and start loving people.”
- The Gospel frees you from seeking your value and worth in anything or anyone else
- You are complete in Christ

# Margaret Clarkson (1915-2008)

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“When Christian was crossing the River at the close of Pilgrim’s Progress, his heart failed him for fear. He began to sink in the cold, dark waters. But Hopeful, his companion, helped him to stand, calling out loudly, “Be of good cheer, my brother; I feel the bottom, and it is good.” Then Christian recovered his faith, and passed safely through the waters to the Celestial City. If there are singles who find the waters of singleness dark and deep, who feel, “I sink in deep waters; the billows go over my head; all his waves go over me,” this is my message to you concerning singleness: “Be of good cheer, my brother, my sister; I feel the bottom, and it is good.”







