

TO BE (or not to be) MARRIED?

1 Cor 7:1-17, 25-40

I. MARRY IF YOU MUST (IT'S OK)

- A. Given human nature, its best for most of us—realistically, we cannot change fundamental realities
- B. By Design, good, as Genesis 1-2 declares
 - 1. Progeny—families & children essential both for survival of the species and human flourishing
 - a. Sex is primarily about babies—deepest, most self-evident reason to marry
 - b. World-wide birth-dearth cause for concern—both in Europe and the U.S. too few babies bode ill
 - 2. Pleasure—“if it feels good do it” points to basic need if not a prescription for behavior
 - a. Basic good, instilled by Creator, to enjoy pleasures if properly oriented
 - b. For humans, sex one of most intensely enjoyable activities
 - c. Evangelical approaches
 - 1. Ed Wheat's *Intended for Pleasure*
 - 2. Tim and Beverly LaHaye's *Act of Marriage*
 - 3. Partnership—soul-mate, life-long companion/friend
 - a. Key to ending individual loneliness—“not good for man to be alone”
 - b. Spiritual nurture—sanctifying dimension to conjugal union
 - c. “Growing old together” deeply meaningful—better than insurance or institutional care!

II. BUT IT'S BETTER NOT TO (for a few)

- A. Paul's personal passion for full-time ministry
- B. Single person's advantages (especially in ministry)
 - 1. Mobility—free to come and go as needed
 - 2. Totality—literally full-time service
 - 3. Liberty—risk-taking, without family responsibilities free to do daring things
- C. Single person's advantages in devotional life, discipleship
 - 1. Time alone for meditation and prayer
 - 2. Many devotional classics written by singles—Thomas a Kempis' *The Imitation of Christ*; Teresa of Avila's *The Interior Castle*; John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*
- D. Historical illustrations
 - 1. OT prophets—e.g. Elijah
 - 2. John the Baptist
 - 3. Most Apostles (Peter exception) were (so far as we know) single men
 - 4. Post-Apostolic Fathers (Clement of Rome; Ignatius of Antioch; Justin Martyr; Irenaeus of Lyons) probably single
 - 5. Gregory of Nyssa's treatise *On Virginity*
 - 6. St. Benedict & monk-missionaries
 - 7. Irish monks and missions to the German barbarians
 - 8. French missionaries in Canada, Spanish missionaries in the Americas
 - 9. Priests in concentration camps.

III. IF MARRIED, STAY MARRIED

- A. If married to an unbeliever, stay in relationship
 - 1. Assuming faithful
 - 2. Assuming non-abusive
 - 3. Hoping to win spouse to Christ
- B. Separation (or divorce) allowed if necessary—e.g. Charles Stanley

IV. DON'T REMARRY IF SEPARATED (or divorced)

- A. Rooted in Jesus' clear command
- B. Enduring tradition rooted in earliest centuries for Roman Catholic clergy (not Eastern Orthodox)
 - 1. Discarded by Henry VIII (and some Protestant theologians)
 - 2. Embraced with fortitude by T.S. Eliot
- C. Annulment for good reasons allowed
- D. Difficult, delicate issue