

Women, part 1

(Jesus' attitude and interaction with women; Singles; etc)

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Abstract: Part 1 of a 4-part message on what God's word says about WOMEN and their role in the family, in church, and in society. In this first message, we focus on our model: Jesus Christ. What did He say about women and how did He treat them? How is He treating "His woman" – the church – today? We also cover God's word on SINGLE men and women. And more!

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Good day all you who are of the children and family of God.

Today I'm going to give PART 1 of a multi- part study about one of my favorite topics: what God says to and about WOMEN. As usual, I'm studying and sharing this *not* because I'm the great poo-bah on this subject, but precisely because I need to know more, *much* more. One man found out I was giving this and handed me a useful book, he said – and I gratefully took it from him to review it later, thanking him profusely for thinking of me. The title was intriguing: “*Everything Men Know about Women*” and I could hardly wait to get home to read it. When I settled down to study it, I opened it up eagerly – and this great book “*Everything Men Know about Women*” - but just a book full of *blank* pages! Ha! I'd been had! I guess there are 2 times when a man doesn't understand a woman: before marriage, and after marriage. Well, at least – that's what some would believe.

But even Peter suggests this is worth a study for he tells us men in **1 Peter 3:7** that we *are* to dwell with our wives “with *understanding*.” “Who can know a woman?”, men ask, but we *are* to get to know at least one woman – the woman we marry. So I hope men will find this interesting too, as there will be a lot of material here for men to digest.

Many of you have seen the books in Barnes and Noble called “Men are from Mars and Women are from Venus”. Someone made millions discussing how *different* women are from men. I liked a bumper sticker I saw recently: “Men are from earth. Women are from earth. Get over it!”

SO WHY did I decide to give THIS topic, at this time?

* Several women asked me to address it

* We are all, in type, a “woman” – the woman of God, the wife of God. Can I even say – the church of God is the future “*First Lady of the Kingdom of God*”. We men have a tough time with anyone calling us “the first Lady”, but that will be our role as *wife*, helper suitable for, and executive assistant of, *the* King of kings.

* One more reason: since those giving sermons are men – even outside our church that is generally the *predominant* rule – sermons can begin to unintentionally have a male bias and viewpoint. Examples, analogies, stories, are often given from a male perspective and *most* of the great stories we use are of the men of the Bible – David, Paul, Peter, Abraham, Isaac, Gideon, Samson, Daniel – and of course Jesus. We speak of being “sons of God” – instead of “children of God”. God HIMself is called “HIMself”, and is a Father, and Jesus is a brother, a husband – all male terminology. Women can feel left out.

It's time women got their own series of sermons, but men – don't tune out. There will be plenty here

for you, and in fact much of it is really aimed at men to help us change our biases that have hurt women. I have learned so much from this myself and have done some repenting of my own overly chauvinistic approaches so often. So men, be sure you and your sons are listening too.

I hope you women and girls hearing this series will feel a new bounce in your step and understand your high calling and destiny -- and role! I hope you'll find this thought provoking. I trust you'll email me or write me any questions or comments this series stirs in you, as some of it will be reviewing familiar territory, but some of it may be new concepts – I hope inspiring ones – to you.

As a man, preparing this series is changing me too. I've repented of areas I see where I've abused my role, my destiny and calling. You'll see what I mean as I go along. **This first part will focus on how Jesus treated women – which should be the model for all men for all time.** Jesus walked on this earth and came into daily contact with women. He still walks the earth *in us*, through us.

If Jesus is truly living His life in you and me today – He is *still* treating people, men and women alike, like He *always* did, but this time through you and me! Let me say that again, differently! If Jesus is living His life in you and me today – we'll treat people – male or female – just exactly like Jesus did. Whatever you think scripture says about women – this is crucial – the application of what was intended by the verses we read was obviously perfectly applied by Jesus, who wrote the book! He IS the Word of God, so let's *start* with Jesus and His practice and attitude toward women. You'll see that Jesus interacted with married women, single women, divorced women, adulterous women and widows – in general: women! So there are lots of examples for us to learn from. And He will be our model.

Then, in our next message, # 2 in the series, we'll go back to Genesis 1-3 and I hope to give some insights that aren't often preached, at least not in my hearing, that I hope will be inspiring and encouraging to women and I hope insightful and instructive to men too.

For you women and girls listening in – I don't care if you're 6, 60, or 36 – answer honestly to yourself: **do you ever feel that God favors boys? Do you feel God is more “male” than Female”?** After all, He is called “father” and Jesus is referred to as a “He”, as a “husband”, as a “King” – all male terms.

I hope you'll see how important these perceptions are – whether right or wrong. Is God more “male” than “female”? Pause for a second – and write down what you really feel in your heart.

First of all ladies: you should view all sermons as being for you too. Even if the minister says things like “sons of God” – hopefully you hear “children of God”. There are fabulous examples of deeply converted women who helped change the course of history, and we'll get into some of that too, especially in part 2.

One reason I'm giving this 2- or 3-part message is that I think I see women going into two opposing **ditches: on one hand the ultra liberal feminist** who thinks women should be able to do anything and everything a man does, or to do whatever she wants to do. “She's come a long way, baby” type of woman.

The **other ditch is the repressed**, discouraged, “I'm just a woman” type of lady who thinks

she can't say anything to a man, can't ever be in a leadership role of any kind, and can't ever voice her own thoughts or opinion on anything but always defers to whatever her lord and master – her husband – wants to do. Of course there are many husbands I've known who seem to want it that way too.

Let's start with woman's destiny:

Is God trying to reproduce only “sons of God”? Stop and think. Any father I know well, would – if he could – like to have *both* sons and daughters if possible. We joyfully accept what God gives us, of course.

“Sons of God” is used 10x in the Bible; 5x in the Old Testament and 5x in the New Testament. The phrase “daughters of God”? Zero. But does that mean God doesn't consider Himself to have daughters?

“Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God” Matt 5:9

“..for they are equal to the angels and are sons of God...” Luke 20:36

“...creation eagerly awaits the revealing of the sons of God” Rom. 8:19

“You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus” Gal. 3:26

Please be turning now to 2 Corinthians 6:18.

Now fellas, stop and think. If the roles were reversed, and we kept hearing verses about “you are all daughters of God”, and “creation awaits the revealing of the daughters of God” – how would *we* feel? Well, there *are* “daughters of God”.

2 Corinthians 6:18 ‘I will be a Father to you, And you shall be *My sons and daughters*’, says the LORD Almighty.”

Turn now to Deuteronomy 32 please.

There is an old testament passage, where God is upset with Israel, He's actually angry, even hurt. In describing how God felt, here is what is said:

Deuteronomy 32:18-20

“Of the Rock who begot you, you are unmindful, And have forgotten the God *who fathered* you. 19 “And when the LORD saw it, He spurned them, Because of the provocation *of His sons and His daughters*. 20 And He said: ‘I will hide My face from them, I will see what their end will be, For they are a perverse generation, **Children** in whom is no faith”

God is calling Israel *His* “sons and daughters”. God is calling the *church* today – of which He is the Father – “My sons and daughters”.

I was going to go straight to Genesis 1-2-3 first, but after careful thought and prayer, since so much of what is in scripture is slanted according to the *speaker's* bias – **I think it best to start with how Jesus practiced the words of the Bible** as HE came in contact with women. Once we see who and what our model is to be, perhaps we can read these scriptures about women more accurately, from the mind set GOD wanted us to have. We've all been *heavily* influenced by society in this matter and need to recognize that.

I'll say some things about singles and single women in particular later – but suffice it to

say for now – this message is primarily for all women – and I don’t generally want to separate married women from single women in this sermon, for the most part.

JESUS AND WOMEN

Jesus was the Word, the God of the Old Testament who spoke to Israel on Mt. Sinai. John 1:1-3 and 1 Corinthians 10:4 make that very clear. God had married Israel, and due to their continual harlotry, He finally divorces Israel. Then Jesus came as God in the flesh.

Just a quick aside: There’s some debate going on right now about whether or not Jesus, while He was on earth, *was also God*. The answer is clear: yes He was. There are several strong proofs of that, but I’ll just give you *one* for now: Jesus Himself said we are to “worship God and Him *only* shall you serve”. It would have been a major sin for Jesus to have allowed Himself to be worshiped while He was flesh and blood IF He wasn’t also God – and He certainly did allow people to worship Him. The wise men worshiped Him at His birth. In my transcript I’ll list 4-5 other places where Jesus, as a man, allowed Himself to be worshiped. (**Matthew 8:2; 9:18; 14:33; 15:25; Mark 5:6; John 9:38**). There are many other proofs and this is not the topic today, so let’s move on.

So we’re looking at Jesus’ example with women – because we are to let His mind be in us (**Philippians 2:5**) regarding *all* things. Husbands are to love their wives “*as Christ loves the church*” (**Ephesians 5: 25**) ***He’s our model, our pattern, our standard*** – and we are to grow until we come to the *fullness* of the stature of Christ in all things, including how He treated, and is treating, women (**Ephesians 4:13**).

Jesus as a *man* was the son of God, in the flesh – and *as a man*, He never married. He never had his own family, never experienced sexual intercourse as a man. However, as God who thundered on Mt. Sinai, He married Israel and had to deal with the nation as His wife and children. Eventually He divorced Israel.

You need a God and Savior you can relate to, One you know understands. So we need to understand this: **Jesus *can* identify with being single, being married, being divorced**, and now, after His death and resurrection, **being engaged to marry once more**. He can identify with the challenges each situation poses. ***Had you thought of that before?*** And God *did* divorce. And God *was* single, and God *was* married and now God is engaged, betrothed.

So whatever your station in life, you can go to Him and He understands.

Now isn’t it true that many of us have come to believe, a times, that being single is being in a state that is less than ideal? Because of what God said about Adam’s condition of being alone, and that it wasn’t good “for man to be alone”, we assume singles cannot be in a “good” state; perhaps we’ve even taken it to the point – if we’re honest – *to think that being married is automatically “better” than being single*. **But though it wasn’t good for Adam – that man – to be alone, does it follow that it’s always better to be married?** *Some of us have to really come to terms with some heavy indoctrination we’ve been given that may not have been so balanced itself!* **Is it wrong for a single to want to be single? Stronger question: is something “wrong” with a person who doesn’t want to marry?** Is a single man or woman somehow immature, incomplete, uncompleted – somehow not fully a man or fully a woman if he/she is alone?

What do you think? Write down your answers. Even feel free to pause the tape for a few seconds if you wish. And analyze just how much we've allowed ourselves to be biased against singles.

Now consider this: When Jesus was a *single* man on earth, is there *anyone* who would question that Jesus was a *mature* man, a *complete* personality, with *full manhood* – though He was not married? Would anyone say Jesus was incomplete, because he was single? Was He not the *model* of perfection spiritually? Sometimes we have made being single something really *weird* – but do you realize that Paul actually called his singleness a “gift” from God?! I'll cover that in much more detail later. But I just wanted to say this, because *many* women of God, and men of God, are currently single. Some don't wish to marry, and that's fine. Jesus didn't marry either, and did just fine. You can quibble He's going to marry the *church* – but come on: that's not the kind of 1 on 1 marriage with just two individuals coming together.

* How were women generally treated in public, in Jesus' day on the earth: when Jesus and the apostles walked the earth, women were really put down. A rabbi would not even speak to his own wife in public. They didn't enjoy having female disciples as a rule, and they certainly didn't like seeing women spending time learning about God's word, and asking questions about it. Women were considered unfaithful witnesses, unreliable witnesses in court or for important events. **Now think what Jesus does to rock these unbiblical patterns:**

What I really like about the way Jesus handles this is that He clearly sees different *roles* for men and women – and ***yet He also clearly values women among His disciples*** and treats them with utmost respect, as we'll see, especially in light of the culture of His day.

-- Jesus often used illustrations that included women. This was probably very unusual at that time. By doing this, Jesus elevated women's standing and certainly grabbed their interest as well, whenever He was speaking. He talked to women in His sermons. We speakers today should be sure to talk to everyone in our sermons – the kids, the teens, the young people, retired people, married people, singles, men and women. Jesus did. So women figured prominently in His discourses.

- He spoke of the Queen of the south traveling great distances to learn truth
- The kingdom of heaven is like a woman who took leaven which she worked into the dough
- At the second coming, Jesus said it would be like two women grinding grain, one taken and one left.
- Then there's the story of the **10 virgins** – all about women, in the story (really about the church) and how they demonstrated being prepared for the coming of Christ.
- He praised the widow of Zarepath (Luke 4:26).
- In speaking of forgiveness and redemption, he matched the stories of the prodigal son and his father, with the stories of the woman finding the lost coin and having joy. He used men and women in His illustrations.
- Whom did He use for an example of persistence in prayer? The importunate widow! A woman. If you had been a woman listening to Jesus, wouldn't that have lifted your spirits?
- He praises the poor widow who gave her *all*, her last mite to worship God with 100% of her

money. There may have been a widow they were looking at, and the men may have been snickering at how little she threw in. But if you were a woman listening to Jesus, how would you have felt when He sets everyone straight about how she gave more than all the rest had?

You've got to realize this was *unusual* preaching at that time, to be praising women!

Besides illustrations involving women, **Jesus also made it a point to speak directly to women from His heart to their heart**, in public, personally, no matter what kind of past they had, no matter what kind of person they had been!

Turn to John 4, the whole chapter. Jesus, as a man, and as a rabbi, spoke at length with the ungodly Samaritan woman at the well? There's more going on here than our western world may realize.

John 4:5-9

5 "So He came to a city of Samaria which is called Sychar, near the plot of ground that Jacob gave to his son Joseph. 6 Now Jacob's well was there. Jesus therefore, being wearied from His journey, sat thus by the well. It was about the sixth hour.

7 A woman of Samaria came to draw water.

[Pause: A *woman*. Rabbis didn't speak to women in public. Verse 27 makes that clear.

They're *alone*. A good rabbi would have never spoken to a woman *alone*!

A **SAMARITAN**. Jews avoided Samaritans – whom they considered interlopers, a mongrel people.

And as you know later in the story: to talk to *this "kind"* of woman... another taboo!

- 4 taboos Jesus ignores and begins to *minister* to this hurting soul!

True ministers today, with Christ in them, *still* minister to hurting souls!

Now let's continue the rest of verse 7.

Jesus said to her, "Give Me a drink." 8 For His disciples had gone away into the city to buy food.

9 Then the woman of Samaria said to Him, "How is it that You, being a Jew, ask a drink from me, a Samaritan woman?" For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans. [She knows the score, and isn't expecting Him to acknowledge her, to validate her, to address her! But Jesus does!]

In verses 10-24, Jesus tenderly, lovingly, from His heart-to-her heart *teaches* this poor soul. . . and her life changes *forever*! In fact, her experience is *about to rock the whole city*! That's how profound the loving interaction Jesus has with her, has on her! **Let's pick up in verse 25.**

John 4:25-42

25 The woman said to Him, "I know that Messiah is coming" (who is called Christ). "When He comes, He will tell us all things." 26 Jesus said to her, "I who speak to you am He."

Back then, JESUS doesn't often reveal He is the Messiah to people! Here He handpicks this Samaritan woman to hear the blockbuster good news of who He is and a woman to be the one to spread the news!

27 And at this point His disciples came, and they ***marveled that He talked with a woman***; yet no one

said, "What do You seek?" or, "Why are You talking with her?"

28 The woman then left her waterpot, went her way into the city, and said to the men, 29 "Come, see a Man who told me all things that I ever did. Could this be the Christ?" 30 Then they went out of the city and came to Him."

Let's jump now to verse 39

39 "And many of the Samaritans of that city believed in Him *because of the word of the woman who testified*, "He told me all that I ever did." 40 So when the Samaritans had come to Him, they urged Him to stay with them; and He stayed there two days. 41 And many more believed because of His own word."

There are so many other examples of how Jesus respectfully addressed women in public, instead of ignoring them or making them be in a separate part of the building, as the Jews were wont to do. Now Jesus talked to women – even notorious sinful women – but He didn't condone what they said, but there was a validating, respectful tone in what He says:

- *The woman caught in adultery John 8.*
- *The woman who came to wash His feet with her tears at the Pharisee's home*
- *The woman with a bleeding disorder who touched the hem of His garment*

Luke 13:10-17 *I want you to catch something in this story, which shows how Jesus respected women:*

10 "Now He was teaching in one of the synagogues **on the Sabbath**. 11 And behold, there was a woman who had a spirit of infirmity eighteen years, and was bent over and could in no way raise herself up. 12 But when Jesus saw her, **He called her to Him and said to her, "Woman**, you are loosed from your infirmity." 13 And He laid His hands on her, and immediately she was made straight, and glorified God.

14 But the ruler of the synagogue answered with indignation, because *Jesus had healed on the Sabbath*; and he said to the crowd, "There are six days on which men ought to work; therefore come and be healed on them, and not on the Sabbath day."

15 The Lord then answered him and said, "*Hypocrite!* Does not each one of you on the Sabbath loose his ox or donkey from the stall, and lead it away to water it? **16 So ought not this woman, being a DAUGHTER OF Abraham, whom Satan has bound -- think of it -- for eighteen years, be loosed from this bond on the Sabbath?**"

We need to see this. By calling her "**a Daughter of Abraham**" – this was saying she deserves as much a place here as any "son of Abraham". She's a full Israelite. She's a human being with needs, with pains, with a heart! Jesus also referred to the woman with a bleeding disorder as "daughter" also. She's family! He's saying "You women are *daughters* of our Father". You women are *part of* this great awesome *family* God is building! You're *in*!"

This is beginning to give us shades of what Peter later says – that we are - - as men or women – *all heirs together!* No more man vs. woman. No more battle of the sexes. That was Satan's ploy, not God's ploy. GOD wants us *working together, in harmony*, in love for one another – not in competition! And even Paul – whom some feminists accuse of being anti-woman – says in Galatians

that we stand before God *all as* His children, no more bond slave or free, no more male or female. That's in Galatians 3 and we'll read it later.

I'm feeling this. I haven't always felt this way about women. I do now. Guys - - we're CO-HEIRS with the women. Sure we *know* that in our minds, but do we in our HEARTS know that?

There are so many other beautiful stories.

-- **remember the story of Mary and busy Martha**, who complained that Mary was sitting there listening to Jesus, hearing and learning the word of God? And Jesus' response? "Mary has chosen the better thing" (**Luke 10:38-42**). And later, at Lazarus' resurrection, in that in *that* case when Martha has the *bolder* statements of faith, of acknowledging Jesus as Her Lord and the Christ, while Mary is sitting inside.

John 11:25-27 at Lazarus' resurrection

25 Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. 26 And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die. Do you believe this?"

27 *She said to Him, "Yes, Lord, I believe that You are the Christ, the Son of God, who is to come into the world."*

Jesus took time to heal so many women, to listen to them, to talk to them, to include them as being important parts of His ministry

Luke 8:1-3 "Now it came to pass, afterward, that He went through every city and village, preaching and bringing the glad tidings of the kingdom of God. And the twelve were with Him, 2 **and certain women** who had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities -- Mary called Magdalene, out of whom had come seven demons, 3 and Joanna the wife of Chuza, Herod's steward, and Susanna, **and many others who provided for Him** from their substance."

Don't forget that Jesus also taught differently about divorce. "Women are NOT chattel, not property you can just dispose of any good ol' time you wish" – is the message of **Matt 19:9; Mark 10:11-12** and other places. "From the beginning divorce was not so", He taught. Get back to the one flesh, the point and meaning of "one flesh". Go before God and make the marriage work, if you can, Jesus says.

Now even God eventually divorced Israel when she just *would not ever* stop her adulteries, spiritual and physical, but look how *long* He worked with her before that. In **Jeremiah 3:1-3**, he begs her to return to Him though she's had many lovers, He says. So God hates divorce! (**Malachi 3:16**). *I say that, while also validating the fact that in many cases, as God also divorced Israel, there are some very legitimate divorces in the church.* But I do think there are *too many* divorces today.

One area I've had to –like probably many men have had to -- really repent in, change, overcome, grow in – is to root out the world's view of women borne out of LUST. In Judaism of Jesus' day, the answer was to keep women *away*. They had their side of the temple, and men had their side. Women were to be veiled. Don't look at women, don't speak to women, and perhaps you can keep from sexual sin. That was the formula.

*Jesus came with a **different** doctrine: include the women, have them be in the same room as we preach, but men, “you’ve got to exercise some CONTROL over your thoughts and don’t let yourself lust after them, for that’s the spirit of adultery!” He taught us to discipline our thoughts, not to avoid the women! Jesus called the women “daughters”. Men, when you think of women as family, you are far less likely to lust after them.*

That’s why Paul taught Timothy to regard the younger women in the church as “SISTERS” and the older women as “mothers with all purity” (1 Timothy 5:1-2). FAMILY. You don’t lust after sisters and mothers! You *love* them, respect them, guard them, protect them, care for them, pray for them – but you would never *hurt* them, DISrespect them, you would never sexually sin against them! Now men: *especially* our own wives, our own bodies – we are to give of *ourselves* to our wives, as Christ *died* to Himself, for HIS bride, For His church! What a lovingly *respectful* picture we have here. *He is validating the women everywhere He goes!*

I may be *beginning* to learn that finally now. Boy how I wish I had that picture 20-30 years ago. God is merciful. As long as we learn, going forward, God is merciful. And that is what Jesus taught, *and what Jesus is teaching now – this time through an old repentant sinner -- like ME.*

- At Calvary, on the cross, when the *male* disciples had all fled in terror, with the exception of John, who were the ones faithfully standing by Jesus’ side, encouraging Him? *Many women* disciples (Mark 15:40-41). They shamed us, men. The men disciples came back in a big way later, but the women were there when it really counted. Jesus -- will never forget that.

* **And how about the loving way Jesus made sure His widowed Mom** would be cared for by John, the beloved disciple? John and Jesus may have most likely been *cousins*, by the way. There’s strong evidence that Mary and the mother of James and John – were sisters.

John 19:26-27 “When Jesus therefore saw His mother, and the disciple whom He loved standing by, He said to His mother, “Woman, behold your son!” 27 Then He said to the disciple, “Behold your mother!” And from that hour that disciple took her to his own home.”

Are we getting the picture of what Christ would BE LIKE to the women of the world and the women of the church today? And what HE is like – in the lives of the men who let Jesus’ mind guide theirs, about women? Do you see why I wanted to start with the way JESUS dealt with things, rather than what might be my interpretations of Genesis 1-3, and Ephesians 5 and other passages? We’ll get to those, but we needed the light of Jesus’ actual practice around women first.

Whom did God honor with very first to know the Christ was risen, the tomb was empty? The WOMEN! But you’ve got to stop and *think!* In those days, women were considered *unreliable* witnesses. Especially women who had had demons cast out of them. They probably had been quite strange. And scripture *verifies* that the men didn’t want to believe them!

Mark 16:1-8 recounts how several women, including Mary Magdalene, returned to the now-empty tomb, see the angel, and are told to spread the news, but they were afraid. Let’s pick up the story:

Mark 16:9-11 “Now when He rose early on the first day of the week, **He appeared first to Mary Magdalene**, out of whom He had cast seven demons. 10 She went and told those who had been with Him, as they mourned and wept. 11 And when they heard that He was alive and had been seen by her, **they did not believe.”** **Luke 24:11 says the words seemed like idle tales!**

That first appearance is told in more detail in John 20.

What an honor given – to be the first to meet risen GOD himself – Jesus the King of Kings, an honor given to an ex-demon possessed woman.

If Jesus could honor a woman like that, we men should be able to honor our own wives.

We’re just warming up!

*** Anyway, I hope we see the example Jesus set toward women is very, very strong.

I want to say something now for about 5-10 more minutes about being a SINGLE woman, since so much of what we’ll say in parts 2 and 3 will have to do with married women. And actually this part of the sermon will apply just as well to our understanding of being single, period – male or female.

Before I do, I’ll share **this SINGLES ad** that appeared in The Atlanta Journal.

“SINGLE young black female seeks male companionship, ethnicity unimportant. I’m a very good looking girl who LOVES to play. I love long walks in the woods, riding in your pickup truck, hunting, camping and fishing trips, cozy winter nights lying by the fire. Candlelight dinners will have me eating out of your hand. I’ll be at the front door when you get home from work, wearing only what nature gave me. Call (xxx) xxx-xxxx and ask for Daisy.”

Over 15,000 men found themselves talking to the Atlanta Humane Society about an 8-week old black Labrador retriever.

Many SINGLE women – and single men too for that matter - - really feel left out. There have been so many sermons preached about how man was not complete until God gave him a woman, and that marriage completes a man, completes a woman – that a godly single person, male or female, can really feel left out! ***Please be turning now to 1 Corinthians 7.***

Singles, I want to put your mind at ease. If you wish to marry, fine. If you wish to remain single, that’s fine too. **Paul even commended those who could remain single**, as somehow in his mind they were MORE godly, stronger – than those who had to marry. He actually calls being single “a GIFT” from God! Are you singles and marrieds – prepared to believe scripture? That’s what it says.

1 Corinthians 7:7-9

7 “For I wish that all men were even as I myself. But each one has **his own gift from God**, one in this manner and another in that. **_8 But I say to the unmarried and to the widows: It is good for them if they remain even as I am;** **9** but if they cannot exercise self-control, let them marry. For it is better to marry than to burn with passion.”

I HOPE THIS IS MAKING YOU THINK! For so long we've taken the verse in Genesis 2 "it is NOT good for the man to be alone" – and transposed that concept into all situations, when in Adam's case, it really wasn't good. He had NO other human being in existence. He was lonely, alone. God gifted ADAM with a spouse, so he had another human to talk to, to be with and so the human race could multiply.

But Singleness can be a GIFT. Sometimes we don't like the gift God gives us. Have you ever been given a gift that in your heart you didn't like? Probably many of us have experienced that. How about the gift of being single? Now jump to verse 25.

1 Corinthians 7:25-35

Now concerning virgins: I have no commandment from the Lord; yet I give judgment as one whom the Lord in His mercy has made trustworthy. 26 I suppose therefore that this is good because of the present distress -- that it is good for a man to remain as he is: 27 Are you bound to a wife? Do not seek to be loosed. **Are you loosed from a wife? Do not seek a wife. 28 But even if you do marry, you have not sinned; and if a virgin marries, she has not sinned. Nevertheless such will have trouble in the flesh, but I would spare you.**

29 But this I say, brethren, the time is short, so that from now on even those who have wives should be as though they had none, 30 those who weep as though they did not weep, those who rejoice as though they did not rejoice, those who buy as though they did not possess, 31 and those who use this world as not misusing it. For the form of this world is passing away.

[now in verses 32-35, is Paul preferring marriage or remaining single?]

32 But I want you to be without care. **He who is unmarried cares for the things of the Lord -- how he may please the Lord. 33 But he who is married cares about the things of the world -- how he may please his wife. 34 There is a difference between a wife and a virgin. The unmarried woman cares about the things of the Lord, that she may be holy both in body and in spirit. But she who is married cares about the things of the world -- how she may please her husband. 35 And this I say for your own profit, not that I may put a leash on you, but for what is proper, and that you may serve the Lord without distraction."**

Does any of the above sound like there's something wrong with being single? SO I HOPE THAT HELPS YOU SINGLE MEN AND WOMEN FEEL LIKE IF PAUL WERE HERE, HE'D BE COMMENDING YOU! So, since Paul isn't here, I'LL tell you what HE would say if he were here: "Congratulations on being single! You've chosen well!"

OK – so you still think it's better to be married than single? That's your choice, your option, your opinion. I like being married for that matter. I remember remarking to a single friend about the merits of being married or single, and I remarked how statistically we know that married men live longer than single men do. He just rolled his eyes over at me and then said: "So if you want a long, slow death.... Get married!" (ha!) Touché!

So let's just say it this way: being single now will *not* prove to be a handicap in eternity later. Also remember that the *most complete*, most balanced, most loving, most godly PERSON in history – JESUS CHRIST – *was a single; He never married.*

Any marrieds listening to this: let's GET OVER this notion that a single person, by your definition, is somehow incomplete. Sometimes I think some marrieds – a few -- even think singles are even weird or unbalanced. I've got news for you: marrieds can be very weird too! For that matter, ***I*** can be weird at times! But I think we should lay off the singles.

One single woman told me that every family wedding she went to, one of her old aunts would come up to her, smiling, and poke her in the ribs and say, "You're next." She said that aunt only stopped doing that when she started poking HER in the ribs and saying "You're next" – *at family funerals!* (ha!)

Adam (translated MORE often as "man") needed a companion. He was lonely. ALL alone. *NO other human being was around.* NO ONE to talk to. I want you to remember the REAL point here. And God also needed them reproducing, having babies, so the population would grow. Adam did need a wife.

There are married people I know who are very lonely too.
There are single people I know who are perfectly content, have strong social lives and are *not* lonely -
- and marriage is the farthest thing from their mind. That is OK – per Paul, inspired by God!

One more thought for you singles: It is MUCH better to be single and at peace with that – than to be married but wish you were single. And there are *millions* of people around the world who are married, who wish they were single. They're *unhappily* married, they're miserable, they're unsatisfied with the spouse they have in one way or another, and frankly though they are married, I know many *lonely* married men, *lonely* married women. ***So it's far better to be single, than to wish you were single. Marriage by itself does not cure loneliness, or can I say... being alone. It only cures a feeling of being alone if there is social interaction between the two sexes.***

Now what about MARRIAGE in the kingdom of God, when we're changed to spirit? How will marrieds fit in? How will SINGLES who never married fit in?

Luke 20:34-37

34 "Jesus answered and said to them, "The sons of this age marry and are given in marriage. 35 But those who are counted worthy to attain that age, and the resurrection from the dead, **neither marry nor are given in marriage; 36 nor can they die anymore, for they are equal to the angels** and are sons of God, being sons of the resurrection."

Neither marry, nor are given in marriage. If a widower continues to remarry – and ends up with 5 wives, then ***it won't matter in the resurrection. He's not going to be married to them in the resurrection. He's going to be married to Christ. And so will his wives.***

And the man with more than one wife in this life won't have too many wives in the resurrection, in other words. And he or she who had no spouse in this life, won't have one spouse too few, in other words. ***It won't matter in the resurrection.*** Some are DIScouraged by that. But let's have faith in the providence and wisdom of God, that what He has in mind will be even *better* than anything we've known on earth until now.

Some feel they can also take that passage to mean that when we are changed to spirit beings, that our unique male and female appearances will disappear. Maybe so, but not so fast. The scripture does not demand that conclusion.

I don't feel that way. I think when I'm changed to spirit, all of me will be changed to spirit. I think those who are women today will still look female then. Those who are male today, will still look male-like then. If not, how will we recognize each other? And what confusion – even in thinking – that could cause if a long-haired godly woman today is changed to a spirit being and now has nothing that makes her recognizable as a the total person she was before?

I could be wrong. We'll have to wait and see. I'm just saying that I don't *assume* that just because Jesus says we won't be marrying or giving in marriage, that men won't look like men anymore or that women won't look like women anymore after our change to spirit beings. I don't assume that men – in the resurrection – are all spiritually emasculated suddenly, in other words.

Let's combine that thought now, with other passages about our destiny:

Gal 3:26-29

“For *you are ALL sons of God* through faith in Christ Jesus. 27 For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. 28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is **neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.** 29 **And if you are Christ's, then you are [ALL] Abraham's seed, and [ALL] heirs according to the promise.**”

The thought of “all” in verse 26 clearly continues through verse 29.

So from a spiritual destiny point of view, women have as much to inherit as men do. We're ALL heirs according to the promise. We just read it.

1 Peter 3:7

“Husbands, likewise, dwell with them with understanding, **giving honor to the wife**, as to the weaker vessel, and **as being heirs together of the grace of life, *that your prayers may not be hindered.***”

Let's read that again. Men and women are “**HEIRS TOGETHER**” of what God has in store. “**HEIRS TOGETHER**”. Peter is getting back to the very concepts of Genesis one. As in ALL cases where there is leadership – and there is leadership in a marriage, the man is the head – nowhere does God want leaders acting like *dictators*! Leaders are to be the **best servers**. Leaders are NOT to lord it over the others, not even their own wife, or their family. They are to lead, but not as dictators, control freaks or tyrants!

What does “heirs together” mean? Let's come back to that in a minute, but first let's look again at what Peter is saying.

Peter is telling the men that if we don't **honor** our wives and if we don't do our best to learn to understand them – that *our prayers can be hindered*! Prayer – and answered prayer – is challenging enough without having prayers be “hindered”! That's the LAST thing I want! Hindered prayer! I

think I see a lot of hindered, impeded prayers out here. *Perhaps* Peter is trying to tell us something! If you feel your prayers aren't being answered, try considering this one part of answered prayer: how are you treating your wife in particular and the fairer sex in general?

So back to 1 Pet 3:7. Heirs together. And it says husbands are to *honor* their wives. In fact, we're told to honor *everyone*! So surely that includes honoring the women generally, honoring single women, honoring one another, honoring the elders, the ministers, the men, the new brethren, the old stalwarts – ***honor all!***

There is no implication so far that women will have a lesser reward, a lesser “position” in the kingdom than men.

Back to Peter's “heirs together”. **That harkens back all the way to GENESIS ONE.** After God made the woman, God's original intent was perfect *oneness*, perfect teamwork, in loving unity. The man and the woman were to – and even today in the church a good marriage is supposed to be like this -- ***working in harmony together*** to rule and manage God's creation. That was God's original intent. Not one-upmanship, not competition, not put-downs. God intended the wife to have input, to have suggestions, to even be able to ask questions – as she supports the union, supports the marriage, working together with her husband to accomplish what God had given them to do, *together*. She was to be like the church is to Christ – do we not ask things of God? Do we not give suggestions of what we'd like to see Him do? It's called prayer! Sure, prayer is more than that, but we do ask, we do suggest, we do talk to, we sometimes even quiz God – and then like a good wife would do, the church should end up with “but I trust you. Let's do your will.” But men are not God. And we do not have the perfect ability to make perfect decisions every time.

That's as good a place to stop for now, and next time we'll really get into the original intent and purpose of the sexes, as we go back to Genesis 1-2-3. In Message 3 we'll go in depth into the commands to love and submit, and how those are not limited to just one or the other sex. Message #4 we'll see how God Himself used women in key spots throughout history, even major leadership roles at times, though we know that man was intended to be the head of a union of a woman and a man. Godly headship has nothing to do with abuse. It has nothing to do with dictatorship, or a stifling control over the wife. Godly headship has to do with being like Christ is with His woman, the church.

So we'll get into all that next time.

You all have a great and peaceful week. God bless you all. *Philip W. Shields*
