

3. The advantages of singleness (1 Corinthians 7:32-35)

4. It is good to marry; it is better to be single. (1 Corinthians 7:36-40)

Table Talk

- 1) What is Paul's opinion about marrying? (vv. 26-27) Does he think it is sinful to marry? (v. 28) Why is Paul recommending singleness? (He gives several reasons.) (vv. 28, 32-35)
- 2) Why does Paul talk about the shortness of time before the end of the world in the middle of a discussion on singleness? (vv. 29-31) In what sense is it true that all time after Jesus' ascension is "short"? Since we are even closer to the end of the world than Paul was, do you think that Paul's advice about singleness is still valid? Why or why not?
- 3) Look up 1 Corinthians 7:36-38 in the NIV, the NASB, and the ESV. What are the similarities? What are the differences? Are these verses referring to a father giving his virgin daughter in marriage? Are they about a man engaged to be married to a virgin? Something else? How does this difficulty reveal the importance of humility in approaching the text of scripture? How does it reveal the challenge of the centuries in understanding an ancient text?
- 4) What advice does Paul give widows? (vv. 39-40) Why would a widow(er) be happier unmarried? What are some of the additional complications of marriage after being widowed? What advice would you give to widow(er)s about marriage?
- 5) How should the church encourage singleness? Or should it? How does Paul's advice about singleness mesh with God's saying that it is not good for man to be alone? (see Genesis 2:18-24) Is Paul's advice about singleness inconsistent with God's institution of marriage? There are some Christian churches, particularly of a postmillennial bent, that put a heavy emphasis on early marriage and having lots of children. What is wrong about that emphasis?