Being Single-Minded

What do you think of when you hear the phrase, “being single-minded”? Well, if you said you think of having one overriding purpose or goal, or about being steadfast, or resolute in your thinking, then you would be correct. But does the thought of marriage pop into your head when thinking about being single-minded? Probably not, but we can actually see this very subject as the basis of discussion in the book of First Corinthians, chapter 7.

The apostle Paul answers some crucial questions proposed to him about marriage as he speaks of the blessings and challenges of being married, versus the benefit of being “single-minded” for God through remaining single. In chapter 7 we can see Paul outlining God’s divine plan for men and women with respect to entering into matrimony and becoming one flesh. Paul then gave what he believed to be “trustworthy” (verse 25) advice to those in Corinth—if you are not married, stay that way, but if you are, then stay that way as well (verses 26-27).

Paul knew once a man and woman made the commitment to be married they would be more preoccupied with all the things required within the confines of marriage, thereby lessening their ability to devote everything they have to living fully for the Lord. Paul then clarifies it is not wrong to marry by saying, “But even if you do marry, you have not sinned; and if a virgin marries, she has not sinned.” He then finishes this verse with a sober warning to those considering marriage by saying, “Nevertheless such will have trouble in the flesh…” (1 Corinthians 7:28, NKJV)

Paul knew there would be many challenges facing the Corinthian church, including persecution for their belief in Jesus. Throughout his travels, Paul had already witnessed many Christians being arrested, beaten, and even killed for this, so he knew it would be very hard for a husband or wife to endure such persecution, let alone having to see their spouse and children endure it.

When Paul speaks of “trouble in the flesh” he wasn’t just referring to the potential persecution brought on by being a follower of Jesus, he was also speaking of the challenges every couple will face when they are married and come together as “one flesh.” Even though both people may be alive in Christ spiritually (believers), and have the heart to follow Jesus, they still remain in their temporary fallen tents (bodies), which continue to die. This means they will have two distinctly separate natures—a new nature in their spirit, and the old one in their flesh.
This results in a continual battle against their individual fleshly weaknesses, such as dishonesty, pride, anger, self-indulgence, lust of the flesh, etc. (cf. Romans 7:14-25) Marriage can be great for meeting some legitimate needs and for solving some issues a person may have been dealing with, such as loneliness, but it could very well bring about many other challenges not previously encountered.

Paul was letting them know marriage will bring about conflicts, hardships, and demands—it will require adjustments along with many sacrifices their singleness would not have. I have personally seen many marriages plagued from their very inception, simply because one or both were following their own physical desires, rather than counting the costs involved of being united as one. I have further witnessed, all too often, where a person has not properly resolved previous issues or dealt with their sinful habits and patterns for living prior to making their marital vows, and subsequently, they will bring these same issues into the marriage, only to have them manifest again and bring harm to their spouse and family.

This does not mean we are to be perfect before saying, “I do,” but we should attempt to be prepared by fully understanding what our commitment to be “single-minded” really entails. We must first be single-minded in our love for God, for His Word, and in being fully surrendered to His will—only then can we truly be the person we have been called to be, whether we are single or married.

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