

“One of the most urgent questions facing today’s generation of young Christians is this—does God really intend for us to make marriage a priority? Confusion reigns in this area of the Christian life. Far too many young Christians sideline marriage, delay marriage, and avoid marriage in an extension of adolescence that is truly unique in human history. Now comes Debbie Maken with sound advice, serious thinking, and an honest approach to this question that will help all Christians think about our responsibility to get serious about getting married. This book should be a must-read for all Christian young adults—and for all who love them.”

—R. ALBERT MOHLER, JR., president,
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

“This book will be life-changing for the singles who read this, as Debbie so aptly pokes holes in all those evangelical church myths about why singles should be ‘content.’”

—JULIA DUIN, assistant national editor,
The Washington Times

DEBBIE MAKEN

RETHINKING THE GIFT OF SINGLENES

Getting Serious
ABOUT
Getting Married

CROSSWAY BOOKS

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Introduction:

Confessions of an “Almost” Spinster

Their young women had no marriage song.

PSALM 78:63

When I was in my early twenties, I didn't really mind being single; after all, my life was full. I had a successful career as an up-and-coming attorney. I liked my family, church, and friends. I had a nice car and an active social life. I was involved in various civic and church ministries. I had a beautiful home and was decorating it to my heart's content. As the saying goes, I was cute enough, smart enough, and—don't you know it—people liked me. The one thing I didn't have was a husband, but I considered that only a minor inconvenience that time would fix.

Like most other young women I knew, I had a series of rotating boyfriends—mostly frogs who refused to become princes—and I figured I'd eventually meet the “right one.” In the meantime I gave myself spiritual pep talks and claimed God's promises. I reasoned that God, the Sovereign of the universe, could change my single state if he wanted to and that it certainly hadn't escaped his notice.

I stuffed deep down any nagging thought of being permanently husbandless, sexless, and childless. This kind of trained ignorance (“Don't think about it, Debbie!”) worked for a while. But eventually the cycle of good days and bad days turned into good weeks and bad weeks, followed by years, until almost a decade had passed. This false hope couldn't be sustained indefinitely. Just as a party balloon shrinks and falls over time, my confidence and hope had deflated by my late twenties.

What has changed? I wondered. My lifestyle was pretty much the same—same house, car, furnishings, family, and friends. But that was the

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problem—it was all the same. My life had not expanded to include a husband or children. The weight of what I lacked began to feel oppressive.

Why wasn't I content anymore? This was a question I hardly dared to ask because I knew being discontent about my single status just wasn't allowed. Raising poignant questions about singleness came with the guarantee of an onslaught of trite platitudes and glib, pithy sayings. "It's better to be single than to wish you were." "Marriage is a lot harder than it looks." "Bloom where you're planted." "It might not be God's will for you to marry." "God knows when you will be ready, and he'll send you a husband at just the right time." "Think of all the ways you can serve God by being single." Knowing what I would hear, I pretended I was happy with my singleness, though in actuality I was totally miserable inside.

I still went to church and was growing in my relationship with God. I even took leadership roles in the singles activities at church. I continued to attend the singles Sunday school class, just as I'd been doing since I was twenty-one. But I remembered something I'd noticed then. As I looked around at women sporting telltale signs of age, I remembered wondering, *Shouldn't these women have graduated from this class by now? Shouldn't they be in the married group or the young family group?* But not knowing a thing about them, I had shrugged off that ominous feeling and just assumed there had to be a good reason why they were still single.

Then one Sunday morning I arrived at Sunday school, smiling on the outside, yet depressed inside. At twenty-eight, I was now one of those women I'd wondered about at twenty-one. That year had marked the end of yet another disappointing dating relationship. I'd also spent the previous few months helping a family struggle through placing their first grandchild up for adoption when their college-aged daughter had become pregnant. For the past year I'd been hearing a quiet voice whisper, *There has to be a better way to arrive at the altar than through all this hurt.*

That morning as I sat down, I thought to myself, *There's absolutely no reason for me to be here in this singles class. I don't even like being single! I'm not content with this.* As soon as I uttered this thought in my heart, I caught myself. *No, that's not what I'm feeling. This can't be possible.* And then I thought it again. *I am NOT content. No, no, NO!* I yelled in my head. *I'm unhappy and sad about still being single.*

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I couldn't believe I was thinking these things. I tried to take such wayward thoughts captive as Paul taught in the New Testament, but the next thing I knew I was telling myself, *I'm not only discontent—I am also angry about being single*. I told myself, *It's time to leave*. So I got up, left that room, and thought, *I'm never going back*.

I poured out my heart to God that morning. I finally admitted to my Maker that I was dating-wearied, lonely, depressed, frustrated, and, yes, terrified of the future. I started to ask him some serious questions. If the last ten years hadn't brought any serious marriage prospects, what guarantee did I have that the next ten years would prove any better, especially since I wasn't getting any younger? At this rate, would I still be able to have children if I married too late? If I grew old alone, who would take care of me? Would a weekly girls' night out and a few occasional dates be it for the rest of my life? These are the confessions of someone who almost became a Christian spinster. Sadly, I'm not the only one who's felt like this. We live in a day when this is the story of many modern women, Christian or not.

At twenty-eight I found myself sandwiched between younger single girlfriends and older ones. My friend Jackie was twenty-two and not yet very concerned with the fact that she was single. After all, she was still fairly young and had just started graduate school. She was cute and went out on dates from time to time. While she enjoyed dating to some extent, she admitted that it was not nearly as much fun as it looked on television. She had definite plans to get married and have children someday, but *someday* was still a ways off. But even Jackie was beginning to wonder when Mr. Right would appear. If he was out there, she hadn't met him yet, nor any of his distant cousins. The guys she'd dated as an adult so far just didn't seem to be husband material. To be honest, they were more concerned with acquiring toys than a family.

At the other end, my friend Rachel had just turned thirty-six. She was now very, very depressed and concerned about her continued singleness. When she was thirty-three, she had even decided to move to a bigger city in a different state, hoping that a higher population of single people would improve her chances of meeting Mr. Right. So far this hope hadn't materialized. She'd been left with a total of three dates in three years, and one eHarmony match that had fizzled out without explana-

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tion. Waiting for men to ask her out was no fun, and she was starting to feel desperate and rather like an old maid. All her single life she'd heard that Jesus was all she needed to be happy; she had her doubts. Other friends—married friends—told her that marriage wasn't all it's cracked up to be, and sex really wasn't all that great either. Confused and lonely, she felt like life was passing her by. Her relationship with God was strong and growing, but she wasn't convinced that God really wanted her to remain single. If he did, why was she hurting so much?

I realized that I couldn't go back to age twenty-two like Jackie and get those six years back to redo things in hopes that I'd be married by twenty-eight. I also realized that in eight more years I could be in my mid-thirties like Rachel, still single and unhappy, with no change in my marital status.

When I walked out of that Sunday school class and vowed never to return, it was my way of saying, "Enough is enough!" I knew that the "same old, same old" of being single wouldn't satisfy me any longer. There was no going back into pretended contentment. Why should I continue doing things just as before—going to singles Sunday school class, doing all the "right" things, and sitting like a bump on a log waiting for some random man to come along and change my destiny? It was time for a change. A big change. Not a new hairstyle or color. Not a new pair of shoes. Not a new self-help book for single women. I had to understand why my generation was chronically single, and if this was something I could overcome or whether I would remain an unwitting hostage to a less than desirable fate. That journey became this book.

My story has a happy ending. I met my husband in July 2001, became engaged later that same year, and married in March 2002. We live a comfortable life in sunny Florida, have two daughters, and hope to have more children in the years ahead. How I arrived at the altar is a fascinating story, one I'll share later in the book. But at the risk of this coming off as just another how-to book, I think the better story lies within how my thinking changed in such a radical way that I was able to get married while time was still on my side. Of course, changing your thinking is not a guarantee that a husband will appear quickly or even appear at all. But it will increase your chances of being married because you will be part of a movement emerging in the Christian world. I see it on the

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horizon as we are beginning to recapture the truth of Scripture on marriage, and that gives me hope.

Perhaps you're wondering why I continued with this book once I got married. Upon hearing of my engagement, one woman at church said to me, "I guess you can put down your pen now." As if my engagement had solved the problem facing single women today! The issue goes beyond just my experience.

According to the United States Census Bureau, just one generation ago, in the 1970s, approximately 64 percent of women had married by age twenty-four, roughly 90 percent had married by age twenty-nine, and 94 percent by age thirty-four. Just thirty years later, approximately 27 percent of women have married by age twenty-four, approximately 60 percent by age twenty-nine, and 78 percent by age thirty-four.¹ The singles population has *tripled* or *quadrupled* in just one generation! I knew there had to be an explanation for this other than God just wanting more "gifted singles" in this generation. The reason I am so passionate about the message of this book is because it is not just about me; it is about the countless untold stories of women who are dying on the vine, know it, and feel like they can't do a thing about it.

In a way, the day I exited the singles Sunday school class was the beginning of the rest of my life. What I learned that morning was that the feelings I had bottled up weren't going to stay bottled up any longer. I had to acknowledge them, confront them, and deal with them. I had to examine their source and determine if these feelings were coming from me, Satan, or God.

I asked the Lord to search my heart and reveal why I was balking against my singleness, against a state I had thought he wanted for me. What God showed me was that I had used most of my twenties to master avoidance, not true spiritual peace. Even more interesting was that he showed me that I was never going to get true spiritual peace about singleness because I wasn't called to singleness, and the Spirit does not give peace about something that is outside of God's calling. God taught me that it was never his intention for people to be single for such protracted amounts of time and that if I continued on this same path, I could only expect further disappointment and hurt in the years ahead.

I am writing this book because I believe what God taught me dur-

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ing the four years following my walk-out will help not only this generation of Christian single women but also the generation to come, which includes my own daughters, Hannah and Abigail.

I spent countless hours during those years studying Scripture, reading contemporary books on dating and courtship, and researching what the church has historically believed regarding marriage and singleness. The things I learned may be surprising and even shocking for today's Christian world—for what I learned challenges virtually everything a Christian single woman living today has been taught regarding marriage and singleness. I also imagine that what I learned and want to share with you will garner some resistance because it goes against the grain of modern thinking.

Let me assure you that what I've learned and what I'm writing about—no matter how radical it may sound at first—is based squarely upon the Bible and was accepted by Christian thinkers for centuries as the prevailing wisdom. As you read, let Scripture be your measuring stick for truth—not psychology, not culture, not what you've accepted thus far, not what sounds good or catchy. There is benefit in understanding where we as a church and as a culture have gone wrong. As the saying goes, those who don't learn from history are doomed to repeat it. Knowing the truth offers the hope of freedom.

We have been told over and over that singleness is a gift. But it's the kind of gift that makes us cringe and smile politely while we desperately search for a gift receipt so we can return it. It's like receiving a sequined sweater that doesn't match anything in our closet, or a Christmas fruitcake. Despite this common attitude, we are conditioned to accept singleness as a gift from God and to be content. Our singleness, we're told, is not up for negotiation.

I want to share with you that this teaching on singleness is a new one—and a radical departure from classical Christian thought that for centuries viewed marriage as the rule for everyone, with only a few exceptions. Christian tradition has never validated wholesale singleness. To the contrary, virtually all of our Christian forefathers regarded protracted singleness as unbiblical and believed that young adults were under a divine duty to marry without undue delay. And this old idea had consequences—there was very little singleness. Because of this belief,

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parents and society maintained systems that facilitated marriage, and men aspired to achieve biblical masculinity by actively searching and pursuing wives in a timely manner—sooner rather than later.

Our new teaching on singleness also has consequences—it is, in part, responsible for costing young women marriage. Any young man who is currently taught that singleness is a gift equal to marriage will have very little incentive to press forward and make a real home by taking on the real responsibilities of a wife and children.

In today's contemporary church, we not only suffer from historical amnesia, we use faulty and erroneous theology to make something abnormal look like it is a sanctified gift straight from the hand of God. We are so conditioned to validate and affirm everyone that we don't have the kindness to tell them when something—in this case, singleness—is actually detrimental to their whole lives. In so doing, we have developed a giant blind spot to the high costs of remaining single indefinitely.

According to Dr. Sanjay Gupta, a neurosurgeon and CNN medical correspondent, singles, from a health standpoint, have a higher rate of alcoholism, suicide, depression, and heart disease.² Linda Waite and Maggie Gallagher in *The Case for Marriage* have found that singles also have a lower level of income than their married counterparts.³

The National Marriage Project, an organization providing research and analysis on the state of marriage in America, has found that “in general, marital delay leaves young adults with an increased exposure to the hazards of nonmarital sex and childbearing, sexual exploitation, loneliness, and a lack of social integration.”⁴ Being a single person for too long has more capacity to produce negative characteristics in terms of sanctification than it does to produce healthy members of the body of Christ. And yet we persist in our churches to praise the single status, placing it on an equal level with marriage. We delude ourselves and the singles in our congregations into believing that participation in a few service activities will somehow redeem or offset all of the negative practical—and sometimes spiritual—consequences of remaining single despite God's clear call to marriage.

Condoning singleness from the pulpit is in large part responsible for causing singles to resign themselves to their unfortunate and less-than-ideal fate. With the benefits of marriage systematically downplayed and

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the supposed freedoms and hyper-sanctification of the single lifestyle glorified, protracted singleness becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy. I believe that the greatest challenge in regard to singleness for the church today is honesty—not flattery of something that goes against the truth of God’s Word.

I am writing this book because we, as the people of God, have been walking around in circles on this issue for the last twenty years or so. The church has failed to offer meaningful alternatives to ongoing singleness or even a good understanding of why protracted singleness runs rampant in our society. My goal is not to condemn the church but to encourage and challenge the church—and us as her members—to change her thinking and teaching about singleness and marriage.

Together we will examine God’s purpose for marriage and see the cultural shift that has moved thinking about marriage and singleness away from what God intended. Then we’ll identify messages about singleness from both church and culture and replace faulty thinking with truth straight from the Word of God. Finally, we’ll learn how to live honestly and increase our chances of marriage by changing how we pursue the goal of marriage, a calling that God intends for us as his people.

Discussion questions are included at the end of the book to spark conversation and further explore the ideas you’ll discover as you read this book. I’m excited to share my journey with you and to show you what God has taught me about what went wrong in the quest for marriage. So grab a girlfriend or two, and let’s get serious about getting married!



PART 1

Marriage
AND
Singleness

CHAPTER 1

What the Bible Says About Marriage

The path to the altar hasn't always been as filled with pitfalls and dangers as it is today. The problems that beset us crept in slowly with a shift toward modern thinking. Surprisingly, much of this change happened in our lifetime. My hope in writing this book is that we can get rid of those problems in the same way—with a revolution in thinking.

The truth is, previous generations saw marriage and singleness very differently than we do today, and that affected how they approached life. We don't need a time machine to zap us back to 1822; what we do need is to discover what these Christian cultures believed and then renew our own thinking to get back to where they were. And their thinking about these issues was based squarely upon the Bible.

So let's go back to the beginning and see what God intended when he created marriage. As the one who came up with the idea, God knows more about marriage than any other source. He is more reliable, more accurate, and more truthful about marriage and its purpose than anyone or anything else we may find.

The very first recorded account of marriage is found in Genesis 1—3. These chapters spell out exactly what God intended when he created marriage. We discover that he instituted marriage in the Garden of Eden—before sin entered the picture—for a number of reasons. But before we look at those reasons, let's talk about marriage and God's will.

MARRIAGE IS GOD'S WILL

Often I hear singles fret, “But I don’t know if it’s God’s will for me to get married! After all, if it was God’s will, wouldn’t I be married by now?” As I’ve talked with close friends about God’s will and marriage, what it’s boiled down to is that because they’re not married now (and often don’t see any prospects in the near future) they conclude that God must not want them to get married. If you’re assuming that God wants you to be single because you are, let me offer some encouragement. God’s will is not dependent on your circumstances or our culture or the guy you dated last year, last month, or last Friday night. God’s will is dependent upon God alone and is revealed in Scripture by what he’s declared to be his divine intention.

Unfortunately, God’s will is often presented as a big unknown—something that only theologians (or at least seminary students) can discern with accuracy. But God’s will at its most basic level is simply what God intends or desires. One of the primary ways we discern God’s will for our lives is by reading the Bible—something anyone can do. In his Word, God reveals his character and his purposes for his people.

The Bible tells us that Jesus is “the same yesterday and today and forever” (Hebrews 13:8). James 1:17 says that God does not change. What we learn about him from the Bible—whether in Genesis, Joel, or James—is just as relevant for us today as it was in the past.

The Bible is clear: *It is God’s will for people to marry.* (There are, of course, exceptions to the rule, but we’ll get to that in the next chapter.) That’s my purpose for writing this book—to help us as the people of God move back to a biblical view of marriage as God created it. Genesis 1:26-28 and 2:8-25 reveal that God mandated marriage not just for his people, but for the entire world. Marriage remains God’s *revealed* will (revealed in his Word, the Bible, as what he wants), even if as a culture we have made its attainment an elusive, secret, perpetual guessing game. Scripture states that “God created man in his own image . . . male and female he created them” (Genesis 1:27). This means that the male-female union is for God’s own glory; marriage reflects his image far better than either sex individually. Because God made us “male and female,” we were neither designed nor intended to be completed only by God on this side

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of heaven; the full expression of maleness and femaleness is found in marriage, not merely in relationships with other individuals.

Marriage reflects God's glory. Dr. Albert Mohler of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary says it should "never be seen as mere human invention—an option for those who choose such a high level of commitment—for it is an arena in which God's glory is displayed."¹ The male-female partnership is to be viewed as serving the purposes of God.² So what else does the Bible say about why marriage exists?

MARRIAGE KEEPS US FROM BEING ALONE

Being single is lonely. Despite a successful career, great friends, and a growing relationship with the Lord, I was lonely. Though my friends and I were told we were "whole" and "complete" on our own, we knew something was missing and we longed for it—we *yearned* for it.

The reason for this yearning is found in Genesis. The Bible doesn't say that God made us male *or* female, but that he made us in his image, male *and* female. Theologian and reformer John Calvin commented:

When he soon afterwards adds, that God created them "male and female," he commends us to that conjugal bond by which the society of mankind is cherished. For this form of speaking, "God created man, male and female he created them," is of the same force as if he had said that man himself was incomplete.³

God was saying that man—on his own, without woman—was incomplete. God said, "It is not good that the man should be alone" (2:18). He declared this "not good" on the heels of six pronouncements of "good" and one "very good" in the creation account.

This doesn't come as much of a surprise. The majority of single women I meet enjoy their singleness about as much as I did—which is to say, not very much at all. To flip a phrase on its head, I enjoyed my singleness about as much as a fish would enjoy a bicycle! That thought is actually a reflection of the heart of our Maker—it simply is "not good for [woman] to be alone." Calvin said that a man without a woman is but "half a man."⁴ The reason we feel a lack of wholeness is because *God designed us to feel incomplete without a spouse*. God himself called the state

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of singleness “not good.” By being dissatisfied with singleness, we’re simply agreeing with God!

Many critics jump in at this point and argue that marriage isn’t always a cure for loneliness. They point out that many people feel lonely in marriage. True. Marriage does not make all of our troubles disappear. However, we must remember that “the blessing of God” (in this case, marriage) often does not “flourish” because, as Calvin said, the “order of nature . . . has been inverted by us” in the entrance of sin.⁵ In other words, because of sin, nothing is as it should be.

But it is always better for us to order our lives according to God’s principles than to be held back because others have failed. In this case, it is better to live by what God has intended in regard to marriage than to miss out on its intended fullness because we’ve seen some unhappy marriages. Just because someone else failed doesn’t mean we will. Think of all we’d miss if we refused to try based on others’ failure! Reformation theologian Martin Luther agreed with Calvin that when God said,

It is not good . . . [this means that] God knows what is better for you than you yourself. . . . If you deem it otherwise . . . you neither understand nor believe God’s word and work. See, with this statement of God one stops the mouths of all those who criticize and censure marriage.⁶

God knows best; we must believe him.

When we look at Genesis, the reason that we are in a world of hurt is obvious. We’ve been stuck in a state that was neither God’s desire nor intention for us! As offspring of Adam and Eve, we too were made with a spouse-shaped hole that only a husband can occupy. Had God intended a buddy system of friends and family to be a happy compromise in the fight against aloneness, he could have simply made more people from the available dust and removed Adam’s loneliness through community. Adam’s new friends could have helped him care for the garden and exercise dominion over the animals. Adam’s mind could have been distracted from his aloneness with more activities, perhaps more animals to name.

But God didn’t choose any of these options. Therefore, it’s safe to conclude that God’s plan was to remove Adam’s loneliness (and ours as his offspring) through a spouse, not through friends or community. Don’t

get me wrong—friends and community are wonderful and have their place. My life wouldn't be nearly as rich without their presence. But marriage was created specifically to relieve our loneliness; marriage is God's intended choice for fixing the problem of being alone. We can substitute friends in a small group, submerge ourselves in our professions, pile program upon program onto our lives, but at the end of the day the loneliness doesn't go away. Believe me, I tried, but it didn't work for long.

Of course, dealing with loneliness wasn't God's only reason for creating marriage. He wanted Adam to have "a helper" in his work, and he wanted them to "be fruitful and multiply" (see Genesis 1:28; 2:18). Let's look at each of those purposes in turn.

MARRIAGE GIVES MEANING TO WORK

After God made Adam, he sent him straight to work. The work God ordained for him didn't just get important things done like naming all the animals—it revealed his need for a partner. When Moses (the author of Genesis) sighed, "there was not found a helper fit [suitable] for him" (2:20), you almost want to ask, "Did he expect to find a suitable helper among the animals?" Well, of course not! But the negative answer that seems so obvious to us may not have been as obvious to Adam; it wasn't until God told Adam to name the animals that Adam realized he was alone. In other words, God ordered Adam's work to make him see his aloneness. God first ordained work for the man specifically but ordained marriage for both man and woman, with the understanding that the man would find the helper he needed to do his work through marriage.⁷ According to Genesis, then, work is secondary to marriage—work has a goal beyond the work itself.⁸

Here's what I mean. As a single woman I often had a hard time making it to work some mornings. And it wasn't just a lack of caffeine. I knew I was called to be a lawyer because of my gifts and talents, but boy, did the enthusiasm for work wane after a while! I found myself asking the same questions over and over: What's it all for? *Who* is it all for? These questions kept popping up because God designed work to benefit family. Without someone to work for, work is just a hollow exercise. God did not design work for us to satisfy our bosses or only to support ourselves.

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The money we earn from work shouldn't be spent on self-centered consumerism or by people we don't even know. God designed work as a way for us to make an inheritance for our children.

In today's world, work and marriage often end up on two sides of an argument. But work and marriage were not meant to be competitors. Marriage was intended to allow people to work better and to prosper together.

Adam understood the delicate balance between doing God's work and having a helper in his spouse. When presented with Eve, he was totally lost in awe of her. "This at last is bone of bones and flesh of my flesh," he said (Genesis 2:23). In other words, "Wow!" He didn't say, "I was wondering when the help would get here." He didn't protest that he didn't have time for a wife after all his tiring duties of gardening and naming the animals. In his unbroken fellowship with God, Adam recognized that God had provided him a wife to be his helper, not to add another burden to his litany of duties.

While some men today do want and pursue marriage, there are also those who flinch at the prospect of marriage, viewing a wife and family as drains on their bank accounts rather than as gifts God designed for their benefit. They protest finding a wife with the excuse that they're too busy working. Worse, many often hold a series of menial jobs, living at home with parents, pretending they can't support a wife, and yet they have enough disposable income for expensive electronics, travel, and other hobbies.⁹

At the same time, the social science data from Linda Waite and Maggie Gallagher in *The Case for Marriage* prove the Genesis point because married men enjoy more monetary success than single men and climb the corporate ladder more quickly, enjoying better health and living longer.¹⁰ How's that for a response to the next guy you date who pales at the mention of marriage?

MARRIAGE WAS DESIGNED FOR THE CREATION OF LEGITIMATE CHILDREN

God also created marriage to produce children. As one pastor/writer has said, "Marriage is a covenantal union, designed by God with a set pur-

pose in mind—and that purpose is a fruitful covenantal union.”¹¹ This is what God meant when he told Adam and Eve to “be fruitful and multiply” (1:28). In other words, make babies!

Of course, babies are born without the benefit of marriage every day. But God designed sex—and the babies who result from sex—for marriage alone. I’m not going to get into the how’s and why’s of that here; that’s not what this book is about. Since we’re looking at marriage as God created it, we’re going to set aside the ways in which we as sinful people have twisted God’s plan to suit our own needs throughout time and history and instead look at what the Bible says about why marriage was created.

Malachi 2:15 reminds us of this purpose for marriage: “Did he not make them one, with a portion of the Spirit in their union? And what was the one God seeking? Godly offspring. So guard yourselves in your spirit, and let none of you be faithless to the wife of your youth.” God created us as sexual beings not only to enjoy sex, but also to create more people who bear his own image. (Genesis 5:1, 3 tells us, “When God created man, he made him in the likeness of God. . . . Adam . . . fathered a son in his own likeness, after his image.”) As we bear children, we pass on God’s image to them. Even putting Christian revelation aside, a purely secular understanding of natural law confirms the superiority and the rationale for the male-female ordering. Natural law simply means that “the way something is made is the way it should act.”¹² All of nature testifies that people and animals come together and group according to their kind in order to be fruitful and multiply.

Because we are the children of Adam and Eve, we retain their genetic coding of being built for intimacy with someone of the opposite sex on both a physical and emotional level. We retain their need to marry for the same reasons. The Puritans preached that marriage was created for the purpose of “mutual society, help, and comfort,” and secondarily for the procreation of children.¹³

LET’S LIVE AS GOD INTENDED

When we ignore the fact that God made marriage for our benefit in these ways, we deny our very nature. God created us for marriage. The reason

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singleness is disappointing, lets us down, and leaves us wanting more is because singleness isn't what God intended.

Stick with me here. Singleness is unnatural—it goes against our very nature. (Think back to the definition of natural law we just read.) No wonder so many single women feel lost and alone! No wonder as singleness goes on (and on and on), we don't become better at handling it.

I don't know about you, but for me, being single just got worse and worse. I didn't become the “dynamic” single that Christian books on singleness promised me I could be. Instead of reaching some sort of singleness nirvana, I realized I was being tricked into denying my very self by pretending to be happy with my single life. Calvin remarked that when men and women are not “connected [in marriage], they are like the mutilated members of a mangled body.”¹⁴

God made the woman for the man (1 Corinthians 11:8). Similarly, God designed the human body to live with oxygen. If oxygen is slowly depleted, the human body might adjust to the strain at first. But if the oxygen content continues to lower as time progresses, the body eventually dies because it is fighting—unsuccessfully—against its design to need oxygen.

I'm not trying to make you feel bad—I promise! I want to be honest and identify that the reason so many of us have balked at the suffocation of singleness is because we have wanted to breathe normally and deeply as God intended. *We don't want to be alone because God doesn't want us to be alone.* We want the fruit of our labors to benefit our own families as God intended. We want sexual intimacy with husbands as God intended. We want legitimate children as God intended.

When you feel suffocated by your singleness, don't deny it or rearrange your life with substitutes. It didn't work for me, and it won't work for you. Acknowledge what God intended, and move forward with honesty.

Notes

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