

Single Christians 4-19-15 AM

When we make our trips back to see family in New Mexico, we typically drive the 24 hour journey. When it is two of us, we may even drive straight through in order to save money and to make better time. However, this is not something that I can do alone. Long haul truckers drive in teams to make better time. Simply stated, it can be quite beneficial to make a long trip with a travelling partner. The journey towards our heavenly reward is made in different vehicles. Meaning, we are all on the same path, but the experience in the drive is quite different.

Single Christians face a very different journey in Christ than do those Christians married to other Christians. In this we would say we are speaking about Christians who are unmarried, divorced, widowed, or married to non-believers. Like making a cross country trip, their Christian journey must be one that takes more time and effort. All of us in the church need to be aware of the needs of all brethren in their Christian journey; it is worthwhile to take a few moments to consider our single brethren.

UNMARRIED CHRISTIANS

First, we speak to those who are not married. According to Scripture, they offer particular gifts to the church and to Christ in their single service to the Lord.

1Co 7:32 But I desire you to be without anxiety. The one who is unmarried cares for the things that belong to the Lord, how to please the Lord. 33 But the one who is married cares for the things of the world, how to please his wife. 34 The wife and the virgin are different. The unmarried woman cares for the things of the Lord, that she may be holy both in body and in spirit. But she who is married cares for the things of the world, how she may please her husband.

THE CHURCH TOWARDS SINGLE BRETHREN: We ought to be thankful for our single members who are able and should be willing to make a devotion of their liberty towards Christ. Too often, especially younger members who are single fail to make that time devoted to the Lord, and end up losing their souls to the world's offerings to the single believer. Such things are dangerous, and we ought to do what we can as a whole body to make opportunity for service.

MARRIED TO AN UNBELIEVER

Second, we need to be mindful of the difficulty it is to be married to an unbeliever. That relationship can be just as strong and emotionally rewarding as being married to a non-believer, but the truth is that no matter how strong, it fails to provide spiritual enablement that believers married to believers provides. How ought we to engage brethren married to non-believers?

1Co 7:12 But to the rest I speak, not the Lord, If any brother has a wife who does not believe, and she is pleased to dwell with him, do not let him put her away. 13 And the woman who has a husband who does not believe, if he is pleased to dwell with her, do not let her leave him. 14 For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband; else your children would be unclean, but now they are holy.

THE CHURCH TOWARDS BRETHREN MARRIED TO NON-BELIEVERS: Too often we fail to see the value of (non-church) socializing with brethren married to unbelievers. We somehow believe that they do not

desire our company, or think that they are content to be apart from our activities. We do a tremendous disservice to both our brothers and sisters and to those who might profit from our company. The result is a sense of ostracizing to a different world. We need to foster a sense of hospitality so that a brother or sister married to an unbeliever feels welcome to our homes, and those of us who are married to unbelievers need to have confidence in our brethren that we are accepted in those homes and engagements.

DIVORCED

Third, we need to understand how hard it is for brethren who have suffered in divorce. We invite people to obey the Gospel, even if they are not scripturally divorced, with the understanding that, if such is the case, we will enable them to live the life of "the eunuch" (Matthew 19:12). But how do we actually enable them? And then, are we making the effort of showing sympathy and comfort to those who are scripturally divorced?

Mal 2:15 "But not one has done so who has a remnant of the Spirit. And what did that one do while he was seeking a godly offspring? Take heed then to your spirit, and let no one deal treacherously against the wife of your youth. 16 "For I hate divorce," says the LORD, the God of Israel, "and him who covers his garment with wrong," says the LORD of hosts. "So take heed to your spirit that you do not deal treacherously."

THE CHURCH TOWARDS DIVORCED BRETHREN: Divorce is not contagious, and it does not suddenly render someone uninterested in social engagement. We need to embrace and comfort and enable those who are divorced by giving them the support they need to walk in Christ. For many of us, we cannot imagine the difficulty it is to

WIDOWS

Fourth, we need to look at our widows with particular attention. This issue was an early circumstance in the church that warranted Apostolic intervention. In a sense, this need was the first "church problem", and it continues to be an area of focus for the church.

1Ti 5:3 Honor widows who are widows indeed. 4 But if any widow has children or grandchildren, let them first learn to be godly to their own house, and give back to their forebears what is due them; for that is good and pleasing before God. 5 But she being really a widow, and having been left alone, trusts on God and continues in supplications and prayers night and day. 6 But she who lives in self-pleasure has died while living. 7 And command these things so that they may be blameless. 8 But if anyone does not provide for his own, and especially his family, he has denied the faith and is worse than an infidel. 9 Do not let a widow be enrolled under sixty years old, the wife of one man, 10 well reported of for good works: if she brought up children, if she lodged strangers, if she washed the feet of the saints, if she relieved the afflicted, if she followed after every good work.

THE CHURCH TOWARDS WIDOWED BRETHREN: Not just widows, but widowers, need our attention. This is an apostolic mandate. The passing of a spouse is something half of us who are married with experience. It is the greatest life change we go through. We need tenderness, affection and hand holding in times like this.

Job 31:16 If I have withheld the poor from their desire, or have caused the eyes of the widow to fail, 17 or have eaten my bit alone, and the fatherless has not eaten of it, 18 for from my youth he grew up with me, as with a father, and from my mother's womb I guided her; 19 if I have seen any perish for lack of clothing, or there was no covering for the needy; 20 if his loins have not blessed me, and he warmed himself with the fleece of my flock; 21 if I have lifted up my hand against the fatherless when I watched over my help in the gate; 22 then let my arm fall from the shoulder blade, and let my arm be broken from the elbow. 23 For trouble from God is a terror to me, and I could not do anything because of His highness.

CONCLUSIONS: Brethren who are single offer the church our greatest resources and our most important responsibilities as a Family. We need to make sure we are not avoiding this but embracing it.

1. Singles who live alone have nobody to discuss things with, get feedback from, communicate with or use as a sounding board when they have ideas, questions, distresses or need advice / guidance on a daily basis; unless they have good friends or family members they talk to every day.
2. It has been proven in studies that lack of human contact, especially touch, can stunt growth and cause depression. Singles often go for days/weeks/months without other humans touching them.
3. Singles often lack companionship and isolation can cause loneliness, depression, anxiety, etc.
4. Single women (especially elderly) who live alone often have things around the house that need to be done and they cannot do those things themselves, or if they do, it is often a real struggle and takes much longer for them to do it (often resulting in injury or illness) than it would for a man or someone younger to do. If they have financial difficulties, that compounds the problem because they cannot afford to pay someone to do it or if they do, it affects their budget and they suffer in other areas.
5. It is never easy or comfortable asking for help from others, so some singles may often go without things they may need because they are ashamed, embarrassed or humiliated to ask for help, especially if they have ongoing needs and have to ask often.
6. Singles do not get the daily support and encouragement that others get from a spouse, children, parent, etc. This affects them spiritually, emotionally and mentally. They may pray and study God's word a lot, but the lack of human companionship and interaction can have a negative effect. We know this is true because God gave His children the church so that they would have others to help them along and to encourage each other. However, daily life gets in the way for most people (family, chores, activities, recreation, etc.) and they forget about those who have nobody else but the church for that support and encouragement. Christians may not realize how a single person

often longs to be invited to do something with others from time to time, or have visitors or have someone just ask what they would like to do and then do it with them.