

**Group Study on Singleness**

*What you will need:*

* A print out of this document
* A Bible

*Read aloud the following excerpt and use your Bible to look up the passages cited in the text*

We live in a highly sexualised society which puts a great value on romantic relationships. We hear about them in the movies, on television, in magazines, and in every form of social media.

We can feel tempted to think that if we are not in a romantic relationship then we are somehow incomplete. Yet this is not how God sees things.

In fact, Jesus himself speaks of singleness and celibacy and as a special gift of God! Referring to these people as “eunuchs”, he encourages those who have been given this gift to embrace their calling:

*“Not all men can receive this saying, but only those to whom it has been given. For there are eunuchs who have been so from birth, and there are eunuchs who have been made eunuchs by men, and there are eunuchs who have made themselves eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of heaven. He who is able to receive this, let him receive it.”* (Matthew 19: 12)

St Paul, too, encourages people to embrace the single life, and even highlights advantages of being single. People who are single, he says, are spared the *‘troubles’* that come with marriage and family (1 Corinthians 7:28), and so can devote themselves more fully to God’s work. St Paul writes:

*‘An unmarried man is concerned about the Lord’s affairs—how he can please the Lord.**But a married man is concerned about the affairs of this world—how he can please his wife—and his interests are divided.’* (1 Corinthians 7:32-34)

Through these passages, both Jesus and St Paul are telling us being single is a legitimate vocation that is pleasing in the eyes of God. Yet, of course, life as a single person may not always be easy. For many of us, it may not be the vocation we “want” or would "choose”. We may feel lonely, sexually frustrated, or deeply long to have a spouse and children of our own.

Yet Christ calls us to set our eyes on him, and to lay our requests before him, with thanksgiving (Philippians 4:6). This might mean praying that God gives us a spouse with whom to share life’s journey, or maybe it means finding contentment in the single life. Either way, we can focus on the good gifts God has given us, seeking first the kingdom of God, and serving those around us in love.

*Discussion questions*

* Can singleness be a blessing? Explain.
* Can you think of single people in your life who have been a blessing to you? In what way have they been a blessing to you?
* How can being single help you to serve Christ?
* Is it wrong to seek a spouse and desire marriage?
* What can you do if you are single and desire marriage, but it doesn’t seem to be happening for you?
* Could singleness be what God is calling you to? What are the unique ways that you can serve God in that calling?

*Close with prayer*

*Recommended further resources*

* CTICR Statement on *Human Sexuality: Three Key Issues* available at <http://www.lca.org.au/departments/commissions/cticr/> under Volume 3 ‘Ethical and Social Issues’)
* Youtube talk entitled ‘Complete in Him’ by Lutheran Laura Davis (30 mins): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Uj9IB4eCZnA&index=3&list=PLbudqXpnAJggvS2Z5BWKTNIGWD5yzwrY9>
* Conference paper by Dr John Kleinig entitled ‘The Beauty of Chastity: Reclaiming Sexual Virtue’: <http://www.johnkleinig.com/files/1514/4210/8671/Beauty_of_chastity.pdf>
* Online article: ‘Four things God says to Singles’: <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/four-things-god-says-singles>
* Youtube lecture entitled ‘Courtship Matters’ with academics Leon and Amy Kass (1 hour): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JDcFtqwNC0w>
* Book: ‘The Thrill of the Chaste: Finding Fulfilment While Keeping Your Clothes On’ by Dawn Eden