



THE GOSPEL OF

MARK



Sermon Series Notes

“Singleness, & Singlemindedness” (Mark 10:1-12)

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We are springboarding from Mark 10:1-12, talking about marriage, and relationships in general. Last time we began talking about what a godly marriage looks like. As we continue today, our focus is “singleness, and singlemindedness.”

I am very thankful to be married, and very thankful to be married to Wendy Hodges. Some people want to be married, just not to their spouse.

I have found that some people who are married now want to be single, and most single people I talk to want to be married. The irony is that some people now married who want to be single are the same ones that could not wait to get married!

See I Cor.7:27-31; What Paul is talking about is being single minded for the Lord, regardless of the present circumstances of your life. He wished that everyone could be single like him, and be single minded for the Lord (Read I Cor.7:7, 32-35).

My first year as a young Christian I stayed away from girls altogether. I had lived an immoral lifestyle for years, and as a result of my new life in Christ, was now living to please the Lord. I was pure (sexually), and I wanted to remain pure. But it was more than that. I wanted the Lord to be number one in my life above all others.

A few months after arriving at Liberty Baptist College (now LU), a bunch of my newfound bros in the Lord formed the BTTR club, and I was happy to join. We believed the rapture of the church was going to happen in our lifetime (we actually believed it would happen really soon), so the BTTR club stood for “Bachelors ‘Til The Rapture.”

Though you may have never been in a BTTR club, I wonder if anyone listening to this message is committed to staying single for the Lord, for the rest of your life? I wonder if

anyone thinks they will unwillingly remain single, for the rest of their life (Don't raise your hand)?

Do you have the "gift" of singleness? See Matthew 19:7-12.

I used to think that if someone had the gift of singleness, they would not have a longing to get married, but I have discovered this is simply not true.

Gladys May Aylward was a British evangelical Christian missionary to China, whose story was told in the book *The Small Woman*, by Alan Burgess, published in 1957, and made into the film *The Inn of the Sixth Happiness*, starring Ingrid Bergman, in 1958. The movie was produced by Twentieth Century Fox, and filmed entirely in North Wales and England.

Gladys dedicated her life to God at a revival service in London in 1930. Soon afterward, with less than ten dollars in her handbag, she set out for China to help an aging missionary with her work. After a perilous journey by train, bus, ship, and mule, Gladys arrived in the city of Yangchen, and here she helped this missionary turn an old building into an inn. Whenever travelers came to the inn, these women gave them food and lodging, using this as an opportunity to tell them about Jesus Christ. Gladys learned Chinese, and soon after the missionary died, leaving Gladys to run the inn. She met and became friends with a Welsh missionary couple in a nearby town, and when she saw how happy they were as husband and wife, she realized she was lonely. She began to pray for a husband, specifically an Englishman. After two years of praying, Gladys confided to a friend, "I know God answers prayer, so I believe He has told my Englishman to come to China, but he must not have obeyed God's call." In 1938 Japan invaded China, and the city of Yangchen was bombed. Gladys Aylward gathered ninety-four orphans and led them on a harrowing twelve-day trek over the mountains, and finally to safety. Her story was later made into a movie starring Ingrid Bergman - "The Inn of the Sixth Happiness." Gladys died a single woman in 1970 having never found her Englishman. Though single all her life, Gladys Aylward once remarked that she was sometimes lonely but never alone.

Canadian-born hymn writer Edith Margaret Clarkson struggled with her singleness in her early years. Like most girls, she had a glowing mental image of her wedding day from an early age. In time she realized that God had called her to a single life. Though reluctant at first, she ultimately embraced her singleness as a gift from God.

Henrietta Mears chose to remain single so that she might have time to study and teach God's Word. She spearheaded an effort to acquire a privately owned resort in the San

Bernardino Mountains and transform it into a Christian retreat center, Forest Home. She founded the first Christian education publishing house, Gospel Light Publications. She founded the Hollywood Christian Group, a Bible study and fellowship group for people in the entertainment industry. Through this group she led many Hollywood entertainers to Christ. Perhaps one of her greatest achievements as a single woman completely dedicated to Christ was the mentoring of a young man who came to Forest Home with a soul full of doubts and struggles. Through Miss Mears prayers and encouragement, this young man made a decision to serve God for the rest of his life. I think you'll recognize that young man's name, Billy Graham. Billy Graham said this about Henrietta Mears, "I doubt if any other woman, besides my wife and my mother, ever had such a marked influence on my life."

Robert Murray McShayne of Scotland chose not to marry so that he could devote himself fully to his study of the Word and his preaching ministry. In the nineteenth century he was used by God to see thousands of lives transformed throughout the British Isles.

Paul himself is a great example of accepting his singleness as a gift that allowed him to devote all his energies solely for Christ. Many believe that Paul was once married, and that his wife left him after his conversion, or that he was a widower.

To be single, and remain single minded for the Lord, can be a tremendous challenge. There is the challenge of being lonely, longing for love & romance (a God-given desire, the gospel is a love story). Then there is the challenge of remaining sexually pure (sexual drive is God-given).

I'm so proud of my kids. They have all had their challenges, but so far they are turning out pretty good.

I thought of my oldest son Tanner in preparation for this message. High school can be a challenging time to remain single minded for the Lord; Read from Tanner's senior yearbook.

It is a great challenge for young Christian singles to remain single minded when they go away to college, especially when if they enter into a romantic relationship at college. I have seen many young Christian singles pulled away from a devotion to Christ through a romantic relationship with someone that is either not a Christian, or is not a committed (single minded) Christian.

When Tanner went off to college, his mother & I encouraged him to find a good local church & get involved, and to find a ministry on campus and get involved. He did both right away. We were, and are, so proud of him. He got involved on campus with Campus Crusade

for Christ (now CRU), & after visiting several churches, got involved in Antioch church, where he in time became the middle school youth leader.

We have many single parents in our world, and there is a great challenge for a single parent to remain single minded for the Lord. Not only does a single parent long for love from a man, but they long for a man who will love their children.

If one is not single minded for the Lord before marriage, marriage will more than likely take them further away from any semblance of singlemindedness for Jesus. See Luke 14:20; Matt.13:22.

Jacob and Leah were one married couple where both of them became single minded for the Lord, and that made all the difference in the world, not only in their relationship to one another, but in regard to their impact for the Lord in this life. Both are tremendous biblical examples of learning to live, and love, by faith.

Characteristics of couples who are single minded for the Lord

- Pure (Heb.13:4)

- Patterned After Christ & the Church
 - Biblical understanding of authority (I Cor.11:3; I Tim.2:11-13)
 - Husband's headship (Eph.5:23)
 - Lead, not lord (Gen.3:16b; I Peter 3:7)
 - Jacob's turning point, Gen.32:24-31
 - Love, not lounge (Mark 10:45)
 - One survey of over 2,000 married adults placed sharing household chores as the third most important factor in a successful marriage, behind faithfulness and a good sexual relationship.
 - Sacrificial love (Eph.5:25); Would your wife say anything is more important than her?
 - Cleansing love (Eph.5:26)
 - When the Word is made flesh toward her
 - Wife's submission (Eph.5:22, 24)
 - Limit is disobedience to the Lord/sin
 - Not a forced submission
 - "...her submission is not to be an unthinking obedience to his rule but rather a grateful acceptance of his care...Whenever the husband's headship mirrors the headship of Christ, then the wife's submission to the protection and provision of his love, far from

detracting from her womanhood, will positively enrich it." (Stott, p.226)

- Mutual submission (Eph.5:21; Phil.2:6-8)
 - My attitude and actions toward my spouse is based on my relationship with & commitment to Christ. My singlemindedness for the Lord causes me to persevere in my commitment toward my spouse.
 - My Utmost, Feb.23rd
- Learn to overcome the potential Pitfalls of any marriage
 - The natural differences between male and female. Someone was once thinking of how sailors referred to ships as “she” and “her.” He then wondered by what gender computers might be addressed. So he set up two groups of computer experts, the first comprised of women, and the second of men. Each group was asked to recommend whether computers should be referred to in the feminine gender, or the masculine gender. They were asked to give four reasons for their recommendation. The group of women reported that computers should be referred to in the masculine gender because:
 1. In order to get their attention, you have to turn them on.
 2. They have a lot of data, but are still clueless.
 3. They are supposed to help solve problems, but half the time they are the problem.
 4. As soon as you commit to one, you realize that, if you had waited a little longer, you could have had a better model.The men concluded that computers should be referred to in the feminine gender because:
 1. No one but the Creator understands their internal logic.
 2. The native language they use to communicate with other computers is incomprehensible to everyone else.
 3. Even your smallest mistakes are stored in long-term memory for later retrieval.
 4. As soon as you make a commitment to one, you find yourself spending half your paycheck on accessories for it.
 - Gen.3:16b
 - Forgive, as the Lord has forgiven you
 - Husband to wife: "I'm gonna make you the happiest woman in the world." The woman replies, "I'll miss you."
 - One wife prayed "Dear Lord, I pray for wisdom to understand my man, love to forgive him, and patience for his moods; Because Lord, if I pray for strength, I'll beat him to death. Amen."
 - The day of evil

- The Tammy stronghold; My hitting a wall in ministry, etc.
- Priority is Jesus (Gen.3:15b)
 - Make the Word part of family life (Deut.6:6-9)
 - Focus is not solely on themselves or their family, but on the family of God and the purposes of Christ's kingdom in this world.
 - The church is the body of Christ here, so all of us should be committed to the body of Christ (Eph.4:16). A couple single minded for the Lord is a couple that makes the church a priority, and more than simply attending church. If all you do is attend church, then don't be surprised if that's all your kids do, because they are just following your example.
 - Don't ever retire from ministry; Older couples need to be involved in the life of their church, etc.; Mine and Wendy's vision for our "retirement."

CONCLUSION

- Single? Be single minded for the Lord; Married? Be single minded as a couple.