Paul on Singleness
1 Corinthians 7:25-40

Tim Keller:

Nearly all ancient religions and cultures made an absolute value of the family and of the bearing of children…. [But] Single adults cannot be seen as somehow less fully formed or realized human beings because Jesus Christ, a single man, was a perfect man. Paul's assessment in 1 Corinthians 7 is that singleness is a good condition blessed by God, and in many circumstances, it is actually better than marriage…. [This was a] revolutionary attitude…. Single adult Christians were bearing testimony that God, not family, was their hope. God would guarantee their future, first by giving them their truest family – the church – so they never lacked for brothers and sisters, fathers and mothers, in Christ.

#1: Be Wise (7:25-28)

25 Now concerning the betrothed, I have no command from the Lord, but I give my judgment as one who by the Lord's mercy is trustworthy. **26** I think that in view of the present distress it is good for a person to remain as he is. **27** Are you bound to a wife? Do not seek to be free. Are you free from a wife? Do not seek a wife. **28** But if you do marry, you have not sinned, and if a betrothed woman marries, she has not sinned. Yet those who marry will have worldly troubles, and I would spare you that.

Sam Allberry:

The fact is, both singleness and marriage have their own particular ups and downs. The temptation for many who are single is to compare the downs of singleness with the ups of marriage. And the temptation for some married people is to compare the downs of marriage with the ups of singleness, which is equally dangerous. The grass will often seem greener on the other side. Whichever gift we have—marriage or singleness—the other can easily seem far more attractive. Paul's point is to show singles that there are some downs unique to marriage—some "worldly troubles"—that we are spared by virtue of our singleness. Our common assumption—marriage is better or easier—is simply not true. Seeing what I have seen in the last decade or so, I have to say I would choose the lows of singleness over the lows of marriage any day of the week.

#2: Be Heavenly Minded (7:29-31)

29 This is what I mean, brothers: the appointed time has grown very short. From now on, let those who have wives live as though they had none, **30** and those who mourn as though they were not mourning, and those who rejoice as though they were not rejoicing, and those who buy as though they had no goods, **31** and those who deal with the world as though they had no dealings with it. For the present form of this world is passing away.

#3: Be Devoted to the Lord (7:32-40)

32 I want you to be free from anxieties. The unmarried man is anxious about the things of the Lord, how to please the Lord. **33** But the married man is anxious about worldly things, how to please his wife, **34** and his interests are divided. And the unmarried or betrothed woman is anxious about the things of the Lord, how to be holy in body and spirit. But the married woman is anxious about worldly things, how to please her husband. **35** I say this for your own benefit, not to lay any restraint upon you, but to promote good order and to secure your undivided devotion to the Lord.

³⁶ If anyone thinks that he is not behaving properly toward his betrothed, if his passions are strong, and it has to be, let him do as he wishes: let them marry—it is no sin. ³⁷ But whoever is firmly established in his heart, being under no necessity but having his desire under control, and has determined this in his heart, to keep her as his betrothed, he will do well. ³⁸ So then he who marries his betrothed does well, and he who refrains from marriage will do even better.

³⁹ A wife is bound to her husband as long as he lives. But if her husband dies, she is free to be married to whom she wishes, only in the Lord. ⁴⁰ Yet in my judgment she is happier if she remains as she is. And I think that I too have the Spirit of God.

Final Reflections on 1 Corinthians 7

Be Content to Stay Where God Has Called You
Value the Gift of Singleness
Value the Gift of Marriage