

## Singleness

—Important to remember that to be “single” or unmarried as a Christian is very common calling in the church. This includes not only those who are never married, but those who are not yet married, and those whose marriages have ended, whether by divorce or death of a spouse. *All* of us will be called to singleness by Christ at some point in our lives - for many of us, we will be called to this status more than once.

—For the Christian, singleness means sexual purity expressed as abstinence from sexual intimacy. In a positive sense, singleness as a Christian means to be free from other responsibilities to serve the Lord Jesus and his church.

“Only let each person lead the life that the Lord has assigned to him, and to which God has called him...I want you to be free from anxieties. The unmarried man is anxious about the things of the Lord, how to please the Lord. But the married man is anxious about worldly things, how to please his wife, 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. 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.” - 1 Corinthians 7:17, 32-35

“The disciples said to him, “If such is the case of a man with his wife, it is better not to marry.” But he said to them, “Not everyone can receive this saying, but only those to whom it is 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. Let the one who is able to receive this receive it.” - Matthew 19:10-12

“She who is truly a widow, left all alone, has set her hope on God and continues in supplications and prayers night and day, but she who is self-indulgent is dead even while she lives...Let a widow be enrolled if she is not less than sixty years of age, having been the wife of one husband, and having a reputation for good works: if she has brought up children, has shown hospitality, has washed the feet of the saints, has cared for the afflicted, and has devoted herself to every good work.” - 1 Timothy 5:5, 9-10

—To be a single Christian does not mean to be without a family. Indeed, the sibling relationship in the church is, in many ways, the most fundamental relationship of all - and this is a status those who are unmarried participate in fully. All of us are united, in Christ, as the family of God.

“And his mother and his brothers came, and standing outside they sent to him and called him. And a crowd was sitting around him, and they said to him, “Your mother and your brothers are outside, seeking you.” And he answered them, “Who are my mother and my brothers?” And looking about at those who sat around him, he said, “Here are my mother and my brothers! For whoever does the will of God, he is my brother and sister and mother.” - Mark 3:31-35

“Therefore, holy brothers, you who share in a heavenly calling...” - Hebrews 3:1

“Do not rebuke an older man but encourage him as you would a father, younger men as brothers, older women as mothers, younger women as sisters, in all purity.” - 1 Timothy 5:1

“For you were called to freedom, brothers. Only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another. For the whole law is fulfilled in one word: “You shall love your neighbor as yourself. . . . So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith.” - Galatians 5:13-14, 6:10

—The household (family) of God is to provide care for single Christians in a particular way.

“Religion that is pure and undefiled before God the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unstained from the world.” - James 1:27

—Those are called to lifelong singleness in the church and never experience sexual intimacy in marriage are not less than whole persons. Intimacy, fulfillment, contentment and happiness do not require sex.

“Jonathan lies slain on your high places. I am distressed for you, my brother Jonathan; very pleasant have you been to me; your love to me was extraordinary, surpassing the love of women.” - 2 Samuel 1:27

“This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends. You are my friends if you do what I command you. No longer do I call you servants, for the servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you.” - John 15:12-15

“One of his disciples, whom Jesus loved, was reclining at table at Jesus’ side [Gk: in the bosom of Jesus].” - John 13:23

“Jesus said, “Truly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or lands, for my sake and for the gospel, who will not receive a hundredfold now in this time, houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands, with persecutions, and in the age to come eternal life.” - Mark 10:29-30

### **Statement #10: Friendship.**

We affirm that our contemporary ecclesiastical culture has an underdeveloped understanding of friendship and often does not honor singleness as it should.

The church must work to see that all members, including believers who struggle with same-sex attraction, are valued members of the body of Christ and engaged in meaningful relationships through the blessings of the family of God. Likewise we affirm the value of Christians who share common struggles gathering together for mutual accountability, exhortation, and encouragement.

Nevertheless, we do not support the formation of exclusive, contractual marriage-like friendships, nor do we support same-sex romantic behavior or the assumption that certain sensibilities and interests are necessarily aspects of a gay identity.

We do not consider same-sex attraction a gift in itself, nor do we think this sin struggle, or any sin struggle, should be celebrated in the church.