

The Single Issue

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[0 : 0 0] Well, thank you very much for the welcome. And Naomi, that's the best interview I've ever done. So thanks. No, it honestly is. That was terrific. Now, I do have some slides to go along. So if you get sick of looking at me, look at the pictures up there.

There will be quite a few. And some of them we will whiz through quite quickly. Now, when Paul rang and asked if I would speak on singleness, I said, oh, thanks a lot.

I hate this topic. Why don't you do it, seeing you're single too? And he said, oh, I'll be overseas. Shucks, what a shame. Well, he didn't say shucks. That was my interpretation of it.

And he said, and another friend of yours said it'd be really good. So I said, Anthea, thank you very much. That's terrific. So in one sense, it doesn't matter whether I'm single or a married person or whatever.

As we come to address what the Bible says about any topic, the person's state of being, whether they are married or single, really shouldn't come into it. And I would expect that any of the married folk here who've been trained in looking at the scriptures would be able to speak on singleness as well.

[1 : 0 2] But I do understand that there is a good synergy about having someone who is in the state of singleness presently to come and speak to you.

Now, just because I'm single doesn't mean that I'm an expert. But it also doesn't mean I'm just sharing my thoughts as well. We want to look at what the scriptures say to us. You know, there can be some very thoughtless comments made about people who are single.

And the dinner party in the Bridget Jones movie is a good place to start. I have had people say to me over the years, so are you still single? I feel like saying yes, are you still married?

How's your love life? Oh, not bad. How's your sex life? That's what I'd like to reply if I'm being very cheeky and I know them well enough. And then the goody, oldy but goody, gee, you're not getting any younger.

My goodness, I will alert the media. I had not thought about that. How incredible. There's a lovely lady whom I see every now and then at Access Ministries things. And she came up to me a little while ago and she said, how are you, Denise?

[2 : 0 3] I said, oh, Joyce, I'm really well, thank you. How's your little dog? I have a little dog, Ruby. I said, oh, she's great. She said, is there a man in your life at the moment? I said, well, no, apart from Jesus, no. But he's still there, which is good.

I went to Byron Bay on holidays a little while ago and I decided to go, as I often do, and I decided to go with some friends to a church there.

Now, this is a church that's really trying to reach out to people who are in the Byron Bay community. So often people from a very alternate sort of lifestyle.

The very first thing the woman said who was greeting me and my friends, she said, oh, you're new here today? Yes, we are.

Where are your husbands? I thought that was very sensitive. Now, my friends are much more gracious than I. And they said, oh, no, we don't have husbands. And me being very cheeky said, well, Jesus is my husband.

[2 : 59] And she went, oh, OK. We'll go to the next slide. Have a look at this. I found this on a website just this week. Here's a problem, an issue that was presented by this young person.

In a nutshell, I've been thinking that God could be calling me to a life of celibacy, but I'm not sure. I only think this because I believe that if God had intended for me to be with someone, well, it would have happened by now.

I could be totally wrong or I could be totally right. Any help, please. I wonder what wisdom you would give to this 18-year-old young woman. And she's 18.

Hasn't found him. Maybe God is calling her to a life of celibacy. Have a look at this wisdom. I love this. This is fantastic. There's no boyfriend deadline for celibacy. My dad, for example, never went on a date until his sophomore year at college, at which point he started dating my mum and they got married a couple of years later.

So I know that from his experience, it is quite possible to get married after never having dated until 19. Also, hallelujah. Now, maybe you will wind up a nun.

[4 : 04] It's not for me to say. But no convent's going to take someone who comes along and says something like, I haven't found a boyfriend, so I guess I should be a nun. Rather, you have to have a specific calling to nunhood.

I don't even think that's a word. For them to take you. Not that being a nun is the only way of living a celibate life, of course. Next one, please. What is it to be single? Well, most of us start out this way.

Hands up if you're a twin or a triplet. Well, all of us started out this way, didn't we? We come into the world as one person. And most of us are single through, well, all of us are single through childhood and most of us in the world through adolescence.

Often we are single through as young adults. But even if you have married, perhaps you may end up divorced or widowed or separated and you may become single again.

Even if you do marry, everyone will either be single again when their partner dies or you die. The Australian Bureau of Statistics tells us that being single is not just something that pertains to the folk in the Christian church.

[5 : 14] These are the most up-to-date statistics from the website. And you can see that there is a growing trend among Australians of people who are never married. You can see from the 91 census to the 96 census, it went up to 30% and it's growing at a great, great rate in Australia.

Next slide, please. But it's not only... It's an issue that's commonly addressed in our society generally. Here's some things about why single is bad for you. There was a thing on the BBC News that the health benefits of being married are so large that single men are at greater risk of dying than smokers, say a particular study.

The study looked at comparative risks over a seven-year period, but experts warn that the lifetime risks of smoking actually were much higher. OK? So there you go. Next one, please.

And not only is single being bad for your own health, it's actually bad for everyone's health and the health of the planet because as increasing numbers of people like myself live in a household with just one person and our carbon footprint getting larger and larger and larger, I was terribly embarrassed when I went onto a website where you could judge the size of your carbon footprint.

Mine is huge because I live as one person and my dog, but she didn't actually figure in the statistics at all, in terms of the carbon emissions that people living on their own generate.

- [6 : 49] Some complaints from single people. We read from time to time people in the world struggling with the issue of being single and not just Christians. Here's one. If one more man asks me why I don't have a boyfriend, I'll be forced to take actions I never thought possible.
- I will become verbally abusive. I may become physically violent. Hell, I may even vote for at the next election. I've taken out who the person says so as not to offend anyone. And another woman said, Apparently I had done the unforgivable.
- I had forgotten to get married and have children. Singleness is something that everyone in our world deals with and everyone in our society, but it is different for Christians.
- In much of Australian society... There's a... Great, thanks guys, you're doing really well. In much of Australian society, when people say that they are single, it means they have no current partner or boyfriend or girlfriend, and it may not necessarily mean that they are celibate.
- People can say, Well, I'm single, but that may not mean that they are remaining celibate. They may still well have sexual partners. But for Christians, when we talk about being single, it is quite different.
- [8 : 01] We talk in a qualitatively different manner. When we say we're single, we actually say we have no spouse. We're not married.
- And to be single, as a Christian, I'm convinced, from the scriptures, means that you live a celibate life. Well, what do you think of when you think of the word single?
- I'm going to show you some images of folk who are single. Over the years, there's been a huge diversity of images to use to convey what single people are like.
- Thank you. Do you think of the carefree bachelor? These two guys who've played 007. The carefree and very appealing bachelor, through to the next one, that terrible word, spinster, which originally meant someone who spins.
- Hence the Uzbek lady with the scarf on her head. But often spinsters were regarded with great suspicion. The witch in Sleeping Beauty is associated as someone who is a spinster.
- [9 : 10] Now, the impact of that word can be fairly negative. Next one, please. Here are some images. If you type into Google images of spinster, spinster, these are some of the images that you will get.
- Someone who is prim and proper. Someone who has no fun. Someone who is obviously a bit sad. Although I do like the Mitre 10 ad. That lady up in the top corner mixing up her own cement. I wonder if you identify with any of these images.
- Perhaps, no matter whether you're single or married or divorced or separated, when the word spinster or unmarried person comes into your head, are these the images that come into your head?
- And if you are single, perhaps you identify more with these images. These groovy people. Perhaps if you are in your 20s, and maybe even into your 30s, you might see yourself as some of these people like from Home and Away, or Sex and the City, or even that oldie but goodie friends.
- There's a real trend in our society and in media of seeing some single people as having fun and being carefree, and even seeing the main unit as not being that of the family, but as a very close-knit group of friends.
- [10 : 31] But as you get older, perhaps you suspect that others see you, not quite like you see yourself, like this, as these groovy boys and babes on these shows, but more like this.

Now, I love MacGyver, and so I think there's a bit of Patty and Selma in me, or Edna Krabappel. Now, don't, blokes, you don't miss out here either, or there's the other people from the Simpsons, the boys.

Perhaps you do identify with groundskeeper Willie, or Barney, but these are not our only role models. We understand from Scripture that Jesus never married, despite what the Da Vinci Code tells us.

So do we think that Jesus was a loser in love? We know that our Lord Jesus was fully God, but also fully human.

And what we understand from Scripture is that he lived a celibate human life. He is our role model. However, for us living in the 2000s, we need to understand that people living a long life as a single person is historically quite unusual.

[11 : 54] Until very recently, you only have to look at the Jane Austen Spade of movies that's on, or read anything like that. It's quite unusual for people to remain unmarried.

Nearly all people were married, unless there was something physically or psychologically wrong with them. Because marriage was a contract arranged by people's families.

Their decision to forego the usual path of being married was seen very much by some as a way of dedicating themselves to God.

It was a vocational decision. It was seen as a holy calling, and it was revered. So priests and nuns and monks would live in community, foregoing the normal path of marriage and family and children.

I remember talking with a friend of mine just a couple of years ago, actually. And he said, you know, a hundred years ago, you couldn't live the life that you're living now, Denise.

[13 : 03] You have your own money. You decide where you live. You decide how you live. You're fully employed. You work as a minister of the gospel. You can go around from place to place teaching about Christ.

What a blessed position you are in. And it's got to do with the times that we live in. I thought, that's right. A hundred years ago, I couldn't do the work that I am doing now. It is historically unusual for people to be foregoing marriage, unless for a specific reason.

During the time of the Reformation, though, it was a real return to what the scriptures were telling people about how God expected people to live their lives. It was a bit of a revelation for the monk, Martin Luther, to discover that God said marriage was good, even for the clergy, that people should not hold themselves off being married.

And so Martin Luther married Catherine von Bora, a woman who'd been a nun and who'd lived in a convent community. In fact, she got the great prize because he said, well, I'll marry anyone who's left over.

And all the other people who'd come to understand the scriptures, in a different way, who had been priests and decided to marry. Well, there was Catherine who was left over. And so Martin said, okay, I'll marry you.

[14 : 32] And, but they, there's a beautiful quote about him saying the joy that she had brought to his life and waking up in the morning and seeing these two little pigtales on the pillow of her hair and how wonderful that was.

The goodness of marriage that's talked about in scripture means that a person did not have to stay single to serve God. You could serve God in both states, whether you were married or whether you were single.

But this Protestant view of marriage, some have seen that we've actually gone a bit far. Ruth Tucker, who's a theologian said, we Protestants view the emphasis on celibacy in the Roman Catholic Church as misdirected.

And we see the problems that have resulted from it. But it is entirely possible that we've gone to the other extreme. So that subconsciously we view singles as somehow defective.

Now, please don't get me wrong. I don't want to put a downer on married, marriage at all or married people. But does God regard people who are single as somehow defective?

[15 : 39] Well, the clear answer we've had from our Bible reading tonight is no, God does not see Christians who have remained single as defective.

But we do have to, next one, please, have to understand that marriage will be the norm for most of us. Genesis 1 and 2, as Naomi said, talks about us being made in the image of God, that we are created to relate to God and to each other.

Marriage is God's good gift to humankind. And we know from Paul's writings that he uses marriage, the closeness of that bond, as an illustration of the bond between Christ and his church.

But it will not be for everyone. 1 Corinthians 7 says, Now to the unmarried and the widows, I say, it is good for them to stay unmarried as I am.

But if they cannot control themselves, they should marry. For it is better to marry than to burn. The little two words with passion aren't there in the original in Greek, but they are there in your English translation of the scriptures.

[16 : 59] Here we have the Apostle Paul telling us, it is better. It is good for people to stay unmarried as he was.

Now the issue that's happening in 1 Corinthians 7 is that the Apostle Paul is answering a series of questions from folk who've written to him at the church at Corinth. The church was in terrible disarray.

Their poor theology had resulted in poor behaviour. And so they had present in the church a terrible thing that was happening.

There were two extremes of the heresy of Gnosticism. Gnosticism is that idea of a total separation of body and spirit. And that said that everything to do with the spirit is good, holy, wonderful.

But everything to do with the body is to be eschewed, is to be held off. Because that's somehow tainted, that's somehow a bit evil. Now the two extremes that were happening, and it seems strange that both were happening, because in terms of Gnosticism, if you have that dualistic view that everything of the spirit is wonderful and everything to do with the earth or the body is terrible, you can end up with both of these practices and both of these were happening in the church.

[18 : 25] The one extreme was that, well, because what I do with my body actually doesn't matter, it's really only to do with what I do with my spirit, then it doesn't matter what I do with my body, so I can have sex with anybody.

The other extreme is saying, well, if everything about the spirit is good and everything about the body is horrible, well, I shouldn't have sex at all. I should be like that first guy who wouldn't even shake hands with the girl in the speed dating video.

Both of these things were occurring in the church. And so what the apostle does in 1 Corinthians 7 is to correct both wrong views.

He first of all wants to lay out for them that marriage is God's good gift. It's a gift that was given right at the beginning of creation and it is God's good gift for all of humanity, all of mankind.

And so he's saying, sex within marriage is not to be avoided at all. But he does talk about the sanctity of marriage and makes clear that sex is only for marriage.

[19 : 38] The apostle Paul was trying to convey to his friends in Corinth who were really struggling with trying to understand how they lived out their faith in Christ. He's saying, don't think you are doing God a favour, that you are living a holier life if you abstain from sex within marriage.

That is a wrong view. But he does say that the only place for sexual expression is within marriage. In verses 8 and 9, people who were not married were actually engaging in sexual activity with each other.

And so that's why he's saying, it's better for you, if that's how your relationship is going, for goodness sake, get married. And it's within this context as well that the apostle speaks about being single.

So no matter how you, yourself, or others see you, whether as someone groovy or not so groovy, what does God have to say about you as his person?

I want you to think about this question. Next one, please. What is God's goal for your life? And it might surprise you to learn that marriage is not God's goal for your life.

[20 : 59] It is not the goal of life. But God's goal for your life isn't to be single either. Both, in this sense, are unimportant to the issue of serving God.

As the apostle continues to go on in 1 Corinthians 7, as he speaks about the matter and the urgency of knowing that Christ was going to return, the issue is serving him wherever you are and whatever your position in life.

Marriage is not a destination. It's a method of travel. It's not like you've won the prize once you get married. Marriage and singleness are both ways of serving God.

They are modes of travel, not destinations in themselves. In 1 Corinthians 7, verses 29 to 31, we note the urgency of the time, something I think that we have lost a little.

As Paul says, What I mean, brothers and sisters, is that the time is short. From now on, those who have wives should live as if they had none. Those who mourn as if they did not.

[22 : 13] Those who are happy as if they were not. Those who buy something as if it was not theirs to keep. Those who use the things of this world as if not engrossed by them.

For this world and its present form is passing away. We can get caught up, so caught up in the goodness of this world.

And it is good, isn't it? There's so many great things to do in life and to experience and to enjoy that we can forget that this life, this world, is not eternal.

And neither is marriage. Marriage is not eternal either. In Matthew chapter 22, Jesus speaks to folk who were trying to trick him. And he says that the resurrection, people will neither marry nor be given in marriage.

Marriage is something that is very much for this world. And it does not translate into the next world. Which was a bit of a shock when in my first parish, where I worked as a minister, and I had in a Bible study group of very new Christians, who were really shocked that they wouldn't be married when they died.

[23 : 30] They were quite surprised by that. But it's a clear teaching from Scripture that marriage is for this life and for this life only. But what about that gift of singleness?

Singleness. People speak of the gift of singleness like it perhaps is one of the gifts of the Spirit in 1 Corinthians chapter 12. Is it a supernatural gift?

Do you have the gift? That 18-year-old girl that I quoted from that website obviously thought she did because she wasn't dating anybody at 18. Do I have the gift of singleness?

Well, perhaps, obviously I do because I am single. However, does that mean that it's a supernatural gift? Does it mean that God must want me or you to stay single because that's the way you are?

Or that God must want me to be married because I'd really like to be married, somebody might say? Well, the Apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 7 is speaking of his own state of being.

[24 : 35] And I think the gift he is speaking of is where you are right now. And that came out very clearly in the reading. Do you have a wife?

Don't seek to get rid of your wife. Are you single? Stay as you are. Can I swap this gift at the exchange counter?

Can I swap the gift of singleness for the gift of marriage? Of course you can. And Scripture says you're not sinning if you do that. However, it's not a promotion either. Although it is treated as though it is and that it's a more valued gift.

I was talking with a friend recently and we figured out we've been friends for 25 years. That's a pretty good stint, isn't it? What do we do when people have been married for 25 years?

We give them a great party. And so my friend, when he comes to Melbourne to visit with his partner, we're going to go out and we're going to have a great big dinner to celebrate our very deep, long-lasting friendship.

[25 : 43] In talking to some people, I know that they would sometimes like to swap their gift of marriage for the gift of singleness. When I was preparing this talk a while ago, I said to quite a few of my married friends, now what do you miss about being single?

And one woman one day said to me, it's a bad day to ask. And I said, no, no, Kath, you know, come on, tell me. She said, seriously? It's a bad day to ask.

Okay. So I could see that, yes, she was actually looking wistfully at my life on that day because she was going through a pretty rotten time in her marriage.

Sometimes the married person looks wistfully at folk who are single. And I think that's something that single people can forget. Oh, this is a hopeless image. Take that one off. Thanks.

It's terrible. But I want to tell you, one day I was sitting in, I was having a really rotten time. And I was sitting at the coffee shop, reading the paper, having my coffee, thinking, I'm sick of this.

[26 : 53] I'm sick of sitting on my own all the time. And all I've got to do is read this stupid paper. And I was having a real pity party, as the Americans call it. And a lady from church, she came over and said, oh, Denise, I didn't want to disturb you.

I could just see you having such a lovely time sitting there. She said, I just wish I could sit down and read the paper. And I said, thank you so much for coming over and telling me that.

It was so nice of her. Because there she was with her kids and trying to do the shopping. It's like at Safeway. It's terrible when they're hanging off the trolley. She was having a rotten time.

And I think sometimes you can forget the advantages of both states, of being single and of being married. Next one.

But I'm in love with someone. Well, you may well be. Does that mean God says you have to get married? Well, possibly not. Are they single and Christian? That's great.

[27 : 53] Might work out, but it might not. I think it's really important to be honest with each other. Can I say something to the women and girls here? Listen to what he says.

If he says, I really like you as a friend, he means he really likes you as a friend. He doesn't mean I'm secretly in love with you and I just need a little bit more time with you and then I'll be able to confess that.

Men don't think that way. And guys, don't think that she can cope with, when you've been dating or starting to get to know one another, that she can cope with just being just friends.

She will tell you that she can. She's lying. She's lying to herself and she's lying to you. Don't believe her. She cannot do it.

Don't believe her. Not straight away. Especially not if you've been, if she thinks the relationship's going dum-dum-da-dum and you think the relationship's going chung out the door.

[29 : 10] Now after a little while, you might be able to be friends. But not straight away. Women have this dumb track in our heads that we have terrible trouble controlling.

But guys will be honest with you. Listen to what they say. I've saved you lots of money in therapy.

I'm like Dr. Phil. Okay, next thing. Our sexuality. We need to remember that we are sexual beings and not to be afraid of that. Okay? We don't need to be scared of our bodies because there is more to our sexuality than sexual intercourse.

Touch hunger is real. The thing of, you know, having someone give you a hug. I realised when I was talking with my friends on holidays that the only physical contact I had with a guy was the one I paid.

My physiotherapist. My personal trainer. That was it. You need to have people who can give you a hug. If you think you have the gift of hugging, if you're a man or a woman, please check with other people first.

[30 : 29] They may not actually want your gifts. But you do, in the midst of all that, yes, don't go run around, you know, being unwise to each other.

But we don't need to be afraid of our bodies and our natural God-given sexual desires. Our sexual desires, our libido doesn't get switched on at 16 and then switched off at a certain age.

And nor does it actually wait to get switched on until we're married. We are sexual beings. But the scriptures call us not to be repressed people but to be self-controlled.

Now, this can be very difficult. We need to be accountable. We need to have good relationships with people with whom we can be honest and be accountable.

Naomi mentioned our society's abuse of human sexuality. And so it can be pretty tough living in our society. Now, because there are young folk here, I will just mention very briefly the M word.

[31 : 32] You won't go blind if you do or explode if you don't. Just be wise about how you use your mind and your body.

Next one, please. In our world where couples abound, the church often is not any better than it is in the world with our focus on singleness and marriage.

In fact, I actually think it's much more difficult being a single person in the Christian church than in the outside community. Because we can feel like this sometimes, all alone in the big wide world.

And, you know, it can even be that when you come into church, where will I sit? Who will I sit with? Who can I go and sit with this week? Or those times when you need a medical test.

When the doctor says, I think we'd better check this out. Who do you phone? Who do you take with you? Or when you're throwing up at two in the morning and there's no one there but you and the cat or the dog.

[32 : 47] Who can you call? That's when it can be really tough. And, you know, we can be tempted to doubt God's wisdom and indeed his goodness. But that can be very dangerous.

We need to be very careful of believing the live Satan. All this would be solved if I were married. Would it? My loneliness would be solved if I was married.

Sometimes it is. But I've seen relationships where people are married and one person is terribly lonely. Because it's not a great marriage.

Sometimes we think that sexual frustration would be solved by marriage. You only need to talk to some of your friends who are married if they are honest.

The answer that scriptures call us to is not marriage but self-control also within marriage. It can be very hard, particularly for women as we get older, when we know that our biological clock is at three minutes to midnight.

[33 : 59] And the number of eggs that we have left in our ovaries is diminishing every single day. And it's not the same for blokes. It really isn't.

They can marry someone who is quite a bit younger than them and they can father children at almost, almost any age. It is quite different for women.

I once told me that, had someone tell me that God made me a woman to make sure I had babies. Now I found that pretty challenging. It also made me think about my friends who are married but who can't conceive.

Has she failed as a woman? As obviously I have failed as a woman compared, as according to this lady. I even went for a ministry job once where I was told, oh, actually we wanted a man.

Well, actually we wanted a married family man. And I thought, boy, that's three strikes for me. I'm not a man. I don't have kids and I'm not married. So that was three strikes. Now these things can lead to bitterness and resentment.

[35 : 07] But is marriage the answer to any of these? Marriage is not the panacea for all ills. Just observe the marriages of your friends and family.

Sure, there are some disadvantages to being single. One of the ones I hate is having to pay a single supplement on a holiday. That's terrible. But what of the advantages? The scriptures say there are great advantages.

We can be devoted to the Lord. The place where we really should be known. We'll just skip over that and that and that.

Thank you. The really place where we can be who we are in Christ should be the church, the group of our Christian family. In times of sadness and joy and pain and difficulty in coping, it should be within the church.

There should be people in your Christian community with whom you can be real about how life is for you as a single person, as a married person, as a divorced person, as a widowed person.

[36 : 19] Are there people you can be real with? Choose carefully. Most of all, be real with God. The psalmist pours out his or her heart to God all the time.

We can be absolutely real with God about things that are great and things that are tough. We need to ask for times of refreshing and remember that life can be good and bad, whether you are single or whether you are married.

There are no guarantees in life. If you marry, your spouse may die. Well, one of you will. Either you will or they will eventually.

They may die very early. You may end up divorced. You may have a child, but have a child with a severe disability. You may end up nursing, ageing parents.

There are no guarantees in life. Our life is our life and we've got to live it. In Mark 10, Peter said to Jesus, We've left everything to follow you.

[37 : 25] And Jesus replied, I tell you the truth, no one who has left home or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or fields for me in the gospel will fail to receive a hundred times as much in this present age.

Homes, brothers, sisters, mothers, children and fields and with them persecutions. And in the age to come, eternal life. Single people can often be very guilty about whinging about being single.

And so I think as Christians, we need to celebrate what's good and be real about what is not. My favourite verse of scripture is John 10.10 where Jesus says, I've come that you may have life and have it to the full.

How do we live a full life? As a single person, whether we're single or married, we need to remember the state of our friends.

That being single, yes, there can be a bit more freedom of time, of choosing how you use the time. But there can also be times of loneliness. You can have great holidays. But there's also the challenge of finding someone to go on holidays with.

[38 : 41] You have the opportunity to have time with people. But you have to actually make that time and organise time to see friends. As a single person, you can just pick up and go.

But the disadvantage is you have to make decisions by yourself. And often, if you pick up and go and move into state or move to another town or move to another country, you are doing so on your own.

And so the support networks, you have to work hard at making them for yourself. As a single person, the advantage is you can be focused on what you want to do. The downside of that is you can be very selfish.

One of the great things about our friends, if they're real with us, is that they can actually tell you when you are being selfish. I live with my dog. If she's annoying me, she goes outside.

Doesn't matter what time of day or night, she goes outside. I don't have to put up with her. When I flattered with my friend, Leanne, I couldn't put her outside when she annoyed me.

[39 : 37] And nor could she put me outside. But we can be very selfish. How do we live life to the full? Number one, don't put your life on hold. Or fill it up either.

Don't be a whinger. Don't whinge about the state that you are in. And also, don't feel you have to go to every wedding. A friend of mine who's turning 60 this year, she told me a few years ago, about 10 years ago, she said, actually, I don't go to many weddings anymore.

Which surprised me. Because I knew what a popular person she was. She said, I find it really tough. So I choose not to go. I thought, wow, what a great attitude. That's fantastic.

She also doesn't write back and say, I'm so angry with being single at the moment that I'm not coming to your stupid wedding. She just declines the invitation. You're invited.

You don't have to accept. But remember, people invited you because they like you. They want you to celebrate with them. So don't be a whinger. Give yourself permission to do or not do things.

[40 : 40] You want to stay in your jammies all day? Do it. You think, I really don't want to do that. Don't do it. Be kind to yourself.

The importance of having a wide variety of friends. Don't be boring. Don't talk about being single the whole time. Don't only spend time with other singles. Be a good friend.

Babysit for your friends. Or take them out. Pay for a babysitter or organise for them to have a babysitter and go out with them. I went out with friends last night and they said, wow, Denise, since you came to Melbourne, we're getting a social life back.

We only went to a movie and had dinner, but they hadn't done that in ages because they hadn't thought to. Be a good friend. Ask your friends out. Do be accountable to people.

Be real about things that you are struggling with in your Christian life, about your prayer life, about your selfishness, about the things that you are struggling with.

[41 : 47] Don't live a life of regret. Jesus said, seek first his kingdom. Seek his priorities. Be open to the possibility of relationship and marriage, but not obsessive.

And you do need to think about how you're going to deal with thoughtless comments and assumptions. If you're cheeky, you can get away with a lot. I'm very cheeky when people are cheeky to me, but that's just me.

Think about how you're going to deal with thoughtless comments and be aware that it's not just people having meaning to be rude to you. People who are struggling with infertility deal with thoughtless comments all the time.

Or you're very selfish only having one child. When are you two going to hurry up and have children? It's not just singles who deal with thoughtless comments. I think one of the important things that we need to do as single people is to live life to the full in the way that the scriptures tell us.

To take on board, to believe what the Bible tells us in 1 Corinthians 7. There are great advantages to being single. There are great advantages to being married.

[43 : 06] Neither is an indication that God loves you more or you're more worthy. Each are ways of serving God and that should be our focus.

I'm going to pray for us. Heavenly Father, we do pray that you would enable us to be people no matter what state we are in our life, whether we are never married, whether we are widowed, whether we're divorced, whether we're separated, whether we're married.

Father, we pray that you would help us to be people who seek first your kingdom, who understand the urgency and the priority of the times, who celebrate the gifts that you have given to us, both singleness and marriage.

And our Father, in the midst of all of this, we pray that no matter what our state, that you would enable us to be seeking first to serve and honour our Lord Jesus.

That is our aim. In his name we pray. Amen. Amen. Thanks, Denise.

[44 : 21] Let each of you lead the life that the Lord has assigned to which God called you. Well, we've just heard that our ultimate goal as Christians should be to serve God in whatever place, in whatever situation he has assigned us.

But can we trust this God, this same God who flung stars into space and parted land and sea, can we trust him to have his hand on our lives?

Can we trust him to take care of the big and the small things? Is our God big enough for us? Is he big enough to take care of us?

Let's reflect on these things by listening to the following song. I could move mountains if I wanted to Part seas and call the fiercest storm I could fling a star through space And return it to its place These things would be so easy for me to do And that same end is on your life I know your every thought I know your every thought I know for you And I know why I have made you I have a plan and purpose for your life

There's a reason I paid for you At such a high price But can you trust me?

[46 : 17] Will you trust me? Will you trust me? Will you trust me? How big do you think I am?

Am I big enough for you? I put the planets in their place And I made you How big do you think I am?

Can you see the works of my mighty hand? You can trust me with your life Your hopes, your dreams, and all your fears I've heard your cries I've seen your tears I'm big enough for you You can trust me with your life Your hopes, your dreams, and all your fears Am I big enough for you?

Am I big enough for you? Am I big enough for you?

We're just going to bow our heads And spend some time talking to God So if you'd like to pray with me Or have a bit of a chat to God Heavenly Father, we pray for you