

# Singleness - Burden or Blessing?

by Shane Idleman

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*Singleness can be a blessing because it allows individuals to focus on pleasing the Lord and serving others, but it requires intentional living and seeking God's guidance.*

**Duration:** 55:25

**Scripture:** Matthew 19:8

**Topics:** "Relationships", "Singleness"

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## Description

Shane Idleman addresses the topic of singleness, exploring whether it is a burden or a blessing. He emphasizes the importance of being broken and humble before God, which is essential for both singles and those entering marriage. Through biblical references, he encourages singles to focus on serving God and caring for the things of the Lord, rather than being consumed by societal pressures. Idleman also warns against being unequally yoked in relationships and stresses the significance of purity and intentionality in dating. Ultimately, he calls for a deeper reliance on God and a commitment to living out one's faith authentically.

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## Transcript

We're going to do something a little bit different tonight. I'm going to introduce the next song because it's really not a worship song. It's a time to just reflect.

But I also want to just thank Ronnie for that prayer. And just that song we sang, Good, Good Father, and I think it's okay sometimes to go to him and say, Daddy, I need help. You know, like my little son does to me, and it's the same thing to do with God.

It really just broke me, looking to God that way and, you know, just saying, Daddy, I can't do this. I need you. And that gets your heart in the right state.

But the song we're going to do next is kind of a tribute to marriage. We've been, in Matthew, talking about marriage and divorce. And I just want to read a few scriptures, Psalm 34.

The Lord is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit. Psalm 51, the sacrifices of God are a broken spirit and a broken and contrite heart. O God, you will not despise.

And what brokenness is, brokenness aligns your will with God's will. And that's the only way a marriage is going to survive. And you might say, well, I'm not married, I'm single.

Well, let me tell you right now, you better go into the marriage broken and humble before God or it will not survive. So we just want to dedicate a song to marriage and brokenness and humility and just take a few minutes and reflect on what God can do with brokenness. So with that said, I'll come back up after the song.

Thank you. What do you think about when you look at me? I know we're not the fairytale you dreamed we'd be. You wore the veil, you walked the aisle, you took my hand.

We dove into a mystery. I wish we could go back to simpler times. Before our scars and all our secrets were in the light.

Now on this hallowed ground we've drawn the battle lines. Will we make it through the night? It's going to take much more than promises this time. Only God can change our minds.

Maybe you and I were never meant to be complete. Could we just be broken together? If you could bring your shattered dreams, I'll bring mine. Could healing still be spoken and save us? The only way we'll last forever is broken together.

How it must have been so lonely by my side. We were building kingdoms, chasing dreams, left love behind. I'm praying God will help our broken hearts align.

And we won't give up the fight. It's going to take much more than promises this time. Only God can change our minds.

Maybe you and I were never meant to be complete. Could we just be broken together? If you could bring your shattered dreams, I'll bring mine. Could healing still be spoken and save us? The only way we'll last forever is broken together.

It's going to take much more than promises this time. Only God can change our minds. Maybe you and I were never meant to be complete.

Could we just be broken together? If you could bring your shattered dreams, I'll bring mine. Could healing still be spoken and save us? The only way we'll last forever is broken together. Amazing grace, how sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me.

I once was lost, but now I'm found. Was blind, but now I see. It was grace that taught my heart to fear.

And grace my fears relieved. How precious did that grace appear the hour I first believed. My chains are gone, I've been set free.

My God, my Savior has ransomed me. And like a flood, His mercy reigns. Unending love, amazing grace.

The Lord has promised good to me. His word my hope secures. He will my shield and portion be.

As long as life endures. My chains are gone, I've been set free. My God, my Savior has ransomed me.

And like a flood, His mercy reigns. Unending love, amazing grace. The earth shall soon dissolve like snow.

The earth shall soon dissolve like snow. The sun forbear to shine. But God who called me here below Will be forever mine.

My chains are gone, I've been set free. My God, my Savior has ransomed me. And like a flood, His mercy reigns.

Unending love, amazing grace. He will be forever mine. Will be forever mine.

Will be forever mine. You are forever mine. Lord, change us and challenge us.

Lord, convict us and restore us. Build us up, but also break us down. Lord, Your grace is so amazing.

Help us walk in it. Walk worthy of the calling of which You've called us. Lord, anoint these words.

Let me not go beyond what You want me to say. But let us all leave here closer to You. And I ask this in Jesus' name.

Amen. Amen. You guys can be seated.

I just want to brag on the worship team. I think we've got a pretty good couple of guys. And I've heard a lot of worship around the valley, and these two guys are at the top of that list.

So I want to be thankful for that and recognize them. Thank you, Brent and Ronnie. Awesome job.

Thank you. Every time that happens, I just don't want to preach anymore. I just want to keep worshiping.

But He's called me to do this, and it's what I want to do tonight. As you know, we've been talking about marriage and divorce and remarriage the last few weeks. Can I divorce my spouse because of adultery? Can I divorce because of abuse or abandonment? And we tried to answer a lot of those questions, and I reminded you that I can't answer that question.

Only God can through His word and looking to Him. But I would encourage you to listen to those messages. They're on our website over the last few weeks.

But we were in Matthew 19 towards the middle, and Jesus is talking about singleness, being single. And I thought, well, it's better late than never to give a message to those who are single. I haven't done that in a while.

I don't know if I've ever done that. But I want to speak to that group of people because there are a lot of them. And is singleness a burden or is it a blessing? Singleness, burden or blessing? And if you're married, guess what? We can all benefit from this message.

I've intertwined a lot of principles for us as well. But we left off at Matthew 19, verse 8. Jesus talked about Moses giving the people a permit, actually permitting them to divorce because of their hard hearts. And He went on in verse 9 to say, I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife except for sexual immorality and marries another woman commits adultery.

And to the disciples said to Him, if this is the situation between a husband and his wife, it's better not to marry. So obviously this was happening a lot. And Jesus said, listen, if you divorce except for sexual immorality, and there are different sides of the Christian camp.

Some say you can never get remarried except if your spouse dies. Others recognize abandonment as in 1 Corinthians and also abuse in some situations, adultery. And again, I talked about that in the last few messages.

But tonight I just want to concentrate on this issue of singleness. And they said, well, then we shouldn't even get married then if that's the case. And Jesus said, well, not everyone can accept this, but only those to whom it has been given.

There are eunuchs who were born that way and there are eunuchs who have been made eunuchs by others. And there are those who chose to live like eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of heaven. The one who can accept this should accept it.

And in our culture we're saying, what is he talking about? He's bringing eunuchs and I don't even know what that is. Is that on like a kid's fairy tale? Well, if you don't know, then let's tell you after the service. Let's put it that way.

There's kids in the room and different things. But it's a process by which a male will lose the ability to procreate and testosterone and those kind of things that make them a male. It's removing that.

And Jesus says, there are some who are born that way. So because of something that happens at birth, they're made to where they're probably going to be single. They don't have that sex drive.

And there are eunuchs who have been made that way by others. And you say, well, wait a minute here. That's not cool.

And I say, yeah, that's not cool. We don't see that in our culture. But back then a king would want eunuchs in his court because he would stay away from his women.

The Harlem there, he would serve the king with a heart. They're not full of testosterone and young and adult and all these things. They were made eunuchs for the sake of that king.

And they would serve the king in that capacity. They're actually very loyal in that regard. And then Jesus says, and then there are those who made themselves like eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake.

What I think he's saying there, and most commentaries would agree, is that some people chose to remain celibate so they could serve God with all their heart, with all their soul, with all their strength. Because what happens when we get married, now we have to care for the things of the world. We have to care for our spouse.

When we're single, we can care 100% for God and on fire for God. And it's interesting, in the church we see usually the burden of responsibility for serving falls on the families. Those with kids are serving the most when it should be the singles serving the most.

Technically speaking, they have the most time, the most energy. They can care for the things of God. So let me just challenge you in that area, singles, that we need help in many different areas.

So the application really is this, if you weren't called or created this way, if you weren't called as a eunuch, if you weren't called to being single, it's okay, you can marry. He's telling the disciples, you can marry, not everybody was called this way, but if you were called to be single, what does that mean? And it would probably take me a whole sermon just to explain that, but suffice it to say, when you know that you're called to be single, you know. I've talked to those who have, and they know.

There's not a desire for kids, or there's not a desire for a spouse. They know that God has called them, and they're okay with that. And those of you who know you've not been called to be single, amen, you

know too, right? You say, I am not called to be single.

God has called me to raise a family and to be married. But I really want to talk on this topic from 1 Corinthians 7.32, the blessing of singleness. 1 Corinthians 7.32, it's actually a blessing according to Paul.

He said, he who is unmarried cares for the things of the Lord, how he may please the Lord. So a person who's unmarried cares for the things of the Lord, how he may please the Lord, or at least what they should be doing. From my perspective, many singles waste most of their young adult lives chasing this and doing this and being busy, and they never sit and they take time to care for the things of the Lord.

And it might be a good time to remind you, too, that the waiting time is not wasted time. Anytime you wait on God, that's not wasted time. Actually, you waste time when you don't wait on God.

When you're pursuing all your other interests, all your other things, you're wasting time. But when you wait on God, that's not wasted time, because that returns a hundredfold of what we put into it. But he who is married cares about the things of the world, how he may please his wife.

So where my energy should be focused on the Lord, now a lot of it has to be focused on the spouse. And that's not a bad thing, because God says, Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church. And wives, respect your husbands.

So we see this dynamic taking place. But he's talking about time here. We're only given 24 hours in a day, right, all of us.

How many of that goes to sleeping? Hopefully eight hours, right? No alarm clocks, just let your body wake itself up. I'm getting into the fitness mode here. And then you have a certain amount of time, and if you've got kids, well, there you go.

That's even more difficult. But if you remember back when you were single, boy, you'd get home from work, and there's just nothing to do. So let's go to Starbucks.

Let's go here. Let's go there. And everybody's so busy, so busy.

Facebook, Instagram, Twitter this, Twitter that. Everybody's busy. Singles have become so busy, but they don't have to be busy.

They should be caring for the things of God. So whether you're a young adult or find yourself in the midst of separation or single, I would say separation probably doesn't fall in this category I'm talking about tonight. Because when you're separate, we pray for restoration.

That's our heart. But I'm talking about single. Now, whether by choice or not, but you find yourself single, you can actually care for the things of the Lord.

Now, think about this. He who is unmarried cares for the things of the Lord how he may please the Lord. How does a person please the Lord? Well, their lifestyle pleases the Lord.

Right? Devotional time, reading the Bible, worshiping, it pleases the Lord. But the biggest way that we can please the Lord is by serving other people. So he's saying here, here's why I know, because I have the same devotional life as I had when I was single.

In the morning, a couple hours in the morning, each morning, the same time. So I'm really not serving the Lord more in that capacity, but when I was single, I could serve better. I could serve more people.

And that's where he's speaking to this issue. Those who are single can care for the things of the Lord, how they may please the Lord, by serving others. There's so many opportunities, especially in this church.

I'm going to actually talk about a few. We have hospital homes in this church where we go and we minister to people who are sick or in the hospital in these little homes throughout the valley, West Lancaster, East Lancaster. We just got another one this week.

And we need people to go and minister there. And probably singles and young married couples without kids should be those who do it the most or the primary people helping in that area. Also, we thought of this as far as laundromats.

There's a lot of single people, people in need. They've got their kids in there. They're barely getting by.

What about a singles ministry where you could go into these laundromats, bring the money, pay for all their laundry in the name of Christ, something about God, a track or whatever, and just be their minister to people? Or what about I go to the school district and say, hey, how do you need help? We've got 10 people who want to help at this school. We can clean up trash, whatever you need. But see, we're not doing that.

We get in this bubble to where we think Christianity is just, well, let me go to church and read my Bible and I've done everything. And actually, that should just be the catalyst. That's the catalyst that gets everything else going.

So let me talk about singleness then for a minute. The biggie, and I know this will go out on the radio and the internet and different things, and it might not pertain to a lot of you here, but I think it will help some of you, that it really boils down to who's influencing you. Who's influencing you, the culture or God's word? One or the other will influence you, the culture or God's word, even married adults.

Culture or God's word. So let's look to God's word and find a few principles for those who are single. 2 Corinthians 6.14, if you have your Bible, 2 Corinthians 6.14. It says this, if you don't.

Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness, and what communion has light with darkness? Now, this is a pretty amazing passage because if you were dating somebody, you're a believer and they're not, Paul would tell you, hey, what communion? What fellowship? Communion's getting together.

What fellowship does light have with darkness? Oh, Paul, aren't you being strong? No, he's not. Because you can't mix the holy with the unholy. If I have a very dirty cup of water here and a very clean cup, how much clean water do I need to pour into the dirty cup to make it very all clean and crystal clear? It doesn't.

You can't mix the holy with the unholy. Light and darkness, right and wrong, good and evil, truth and error, they don't go together. They're incompatible.

So when you bring them together, it's actually the light, the right, the truth, the good, and that are damaged. And that's what you're bringing the things of God with the things of the world. You're uniting that

unequally yoked.

A yoke was what oxen would wear. It's this big yoke that they would walk in unison. And they're walking together.

They can pull twice their load. They're walking being equally yoked. So when a believer dates an unbeliever, they are unequally yoked.

They are pulling against what God has designed. Now at this point in the sermon, many people go, oh dear, I'm in trouble. I married that.

Well, here's a word of encouragement. Once you marry that, then the Bible says stick with that. I'm trying to get the people before they get to that stage, the wake-up call.

And I've seen God redeem and God can do wonderful things. Actually, the Bible says the believing spouse should stay with the unbelieving spouse because they sanctify the home. It doesn't mean the person's saved, but God then recognizes that union and the children are covered because of that union, the light that the believer brings into that relationship.

So I'm trying to get you before you say I do. And I shared this with the first service, and I'm glad I remembered it. I forgot to write it down.

But when I was dating my wife, she'll tell you we were confused. Is this God's will? We don't want to make a mistake. Is it God's will? We don't want to make a mistake.

And I was listening to Jack Hayford at the time, and I listened to Chuck Swindoll and James McDonald, John MacArthur, and a lot of those guys. And I still do. But Jack Hayford said something very interesting.

How do you know that this person is God's will for your life? And he said something that really helped me. He said, you don't know until the day you say I do. So you put that relationship on the altar until the day you say I do.

Then you know that that's God's will for your life. Because what happens is many people get into that, well, we're married in our heart, garbage, and don't do anything right, and they just trick themselves. So Lord, this marriage, this marriage is, or this relationship is on the altar.

Lord, I give it to you. Will you lead me as we're progressing, as we're moving forward? So if you find yourself an unbeliever and a believer, stick with it. Pray and fast, and God will use that.

But if you're not to that point, run for cover. That's the point of the message. Paul says, don't even be equally yoked.

But we start thinking, well, I mean, I can save them maybe. I mean, I can bring them to church. God brought us together.

But let me remind you that it's easier to pull somebody down than it is to pull somebody up. If I had somebody here, would they pull me down easier, or would I be able to pull them up? That's what this principle is. The pull of the unbeliever is strong, and it will pull the person down.

Be not unequally yoked, because there should be no fellowship with the things of God and the things of the world. That's not a union he wants to recognize and bless, because there's tons of problems, as you know. So on the encouraging side, if you're in that situation, seek God, let him rebuild and sustain.

If you're not quite in that situation, take it to the Lord. And really, there's not much to take to the Lord. People say, oh, I'll pray about it.

Well, it's pretty clear. I don't know if I should break up. Let me pray about it.

Well, what does the Bible say here? Now, here's something interesting. Some may say that they are Christian, but that doesn't always mean that they are walking in obedience. You look for the fruit that is produced by their lifestyle.

So somebody's dating, they say, I'm a Christian, you're a Christian, too. Yeah, great, okay, great. And that's it.

That's all they look into. And they realize that now the person's only going to church because they are. They're pulling them into the things of the world.

There's no passion for God. So just because they said they're a Christian doesn't necessarily mean that you're gonna be equally yoked. God doesn't say be equally yoked with those who say they're Christians.

He's saying be equally yoked with those who you know have the fruit, the fruit of the Spirit. The fruit is evident. They love God.

If a person doesn't love God, doesn't love his word, there's no selfish, there's no love for others. There's no genuine repentance. There's no genuine faith.

There's no fruit. You know what we call that? A false convert. Oh, Shane, that's pretty harsh.

Well, that's what the Bible calls it. Those who say they, oh, here's some strong language from the Bible. Those who say they know Christ but don't follow his commandments are a liar and the truth is not in them.

And we need to be fruit inspectors. Actually, that's the best time to be a fruit inspector is when you're dating. Watch that fruit.

Watch where it falls. Watch if it's genuine. And the next point is this.

Don't overlook a weak foundation because you like the view. Okay, it's sinking in now. You don't overlook, you don't overlook a weak foundation because you like the view.

Nine times out of 10, the reason people fall into the trap here and get married or pursue things they shouldn't is because lust of the eye. I'm in love. No, you're not.

You're in lust. God created that. Thank God for it.

It has a purpose. It has a purpose later. But it's a caboose, not the engine.

It shouldn't drive everything. Oh, I like that. I've got to have that.

Well, you're looking at the view, not the foundation. You've got to look at the foundation. And I like what Abraham wrote in Genesis 24.

Actually, whoever wrote Genesis wrote this story. Genesis 24. It's a great place to look at singleness and finding a wife if you take time to read that chapter.

Abraham said, Swear to a servant that you will not let my son marry one of these local Canaanite women. Go instead to my homeland, to my relatives, and find a wife there for my son Isaac. Abraham's servant was told where to go.

To go to my homeland and look for somebody who loves the Lord. He didn't say, Go to your local nightclubs and single bars. Go find them in Vegas.

I've got to be careful because some people ask service. Oh, darn it. They met at Schooner's.

Man. Foot in mouth, right? Or you just let it ride and let God sort it out. But anyway, you've got to be careful because where you look is what you find.

That's one of the nuggets you write down. Where you look is what you'll find. You go to a bar, that's what you'll find.

You position yourself in church, more likely than not, you'll find somebody along there for the right reason. God might direct you in certain areas and redirect in certain areas. So you have to be careful in this area, too.

Don't overlook a weak foundation because you like the view. Had Isaac married a Canaanite, he may have easily embraced their false gods and been led astray. So Abraham said, Don't let him marry one of these local Canaanite women because it could lead him astray.

You might say, Oh, come on. No, I don't think that can happen. Well, what led the children of Israel astray? The entire nation of Israel was led astray by Canaanite, Hittite, Perzite, Jebusite, all these nations that were rejecting God.

Why? Because you already have the flesh against you. You got the world against you and you got the devil against you. Now you've got other influences against you.

They'll pull you down. If you join yourself, because at some point, like Samson, you say, Okay, be quiet. Here's where my strength lies.

Samson was pestered and pestered and pestered and pestered and pestered and pestered, finally said, Here's where my strength lies. And Delilah took him down. And that's what happens is you have two opposing forces, good and evil, and being equally yoked.

God saw, you need to be with someone who's going to encourage you, not discourage you. You need to be with someone who's going to build you up, not tear you down. You need to be somebody who takes you away from drinking, not back into it.

So that's what an equally yoked does. You're going in the right direction. What it should look like is a person's filled with spirit, another person's filled with spirit.

Not perfect, okay? Filled with spirit. They come with all their junk, all their baggage broken together, right? But they love the Lord. They want to do the right thing.

They're following His word. They're chasing after Him. They're heading towards Him.

And God brings those two together, equally yoked, going in the same direction. The kids, now, you don't argue over, well, raise them this way. Everything's going towards God, towards that direction.

Not without arguing, not without complaining, not without bickering, but at least it's not darkness pulling down light. That's a big difference. I'll deal with arguments all day long.

Then darkness trying to pull me back in, to darkness. So that's what equally yoked is. You're going in the same direction.

So God saw the wisdom in that. So I think Abraham is teaching that, to be equally yoked. Third point.

Enter the relationship intending to bring, not take. Oh dear. Enter the relationship intending to bring, not take.

The majority of relationships today go into the relationship to take. Not to bring anything. And we read in verse 10 that the servant loaded Abraham's camels with gifts and took with him the best of everything that his master owned.

The servant went out prepared to be a blessing. Today's culture tends to ask what can I get from this relationship rather than what can I give to this relationship. See, when you go into this thing, okay, Lord, what can I give? You're not going to be there, what can I take? And without getting too graphic, I think what most people are taking, you know what most people are taking, right? It's intimacy.

Sex. I'm going in to take as much as I can from this relationship. I'm going to take the purity instead of bring it.

And that's where we get off, is we have to go into these. And you look for somebody, if they're a taker or a giver. Are they wanting to protect you in certain areas? Are they bringing into the relationship? Or are they just constantly pulling and draining? How can I say run for cover any clearer? Because when you get married, these things don't get easier.

Have you heard of something called multiplication? Two plus two is four, you can deal with that, right? But multiplication, when you get into marriage, when things begin to multiply and they get more difficult, that's why God set these standards. It's not, oh, now I can't have fun, no. They're guardrails.

They're guardrails through the canyons of life. Oh, God's word, now I can't have fun. No, now you're not going to destroy your life.

It's funny, you talk to young adults all the time, you're talking about sexual purity. It's all that, no, we can't have fun. And then you talk to them a year later, after an abortion, after a suicide attempt, after they're on medication, hooked to heroin, now tell me that was worth it.

It's not. Because sin takes you farther than you want to go, keeps you longer than you want to stay, and costs you more than you want to pay. So it's not a bunch of do's and don'ts, even though it is, actually.

It's guardrails through those canyons of life. So when a person, well, let's use that, since we've been talking about it, when they abstain in a certain area, right, we've got kids in here, when they abstain in a certain area and they go into marriage, the blessing comes later. But we want immediate gratification, the blessing comes later, God rewards those who wait upon Him, even in this area.

So we have to go into the relationship bringing, not taking. And then the fourth point, next we read in verse 15, as he was still praying, so Abraham's servant said he's going to pray for confirmation. Lord, give me confirmation, I'm praying, God, I'm putting you first, I'm asking for direction.

This is a wonderful prayer if you're single. Lord, I want you to direct me, my life is no longer yours. I mean, my life is no longer mine, it's yours.

Direct me in this area. I'm not going to date, court, do anything until you direct me. Give me confirmation.

And it says, as he was still praying, a young woman named Rebecca arrived with a water jug on her shoulder. And that was kind of confirmation he was praying for there, you'd have to read the whole story. But the point is, I want you to get is, prayer preceded the blessing.

Prayer preceded the blessing, extended prayer, focused prayer, and I know I drive this point home, but it's time to drive it home again. This is not the time for a five-minute devotional, or praying while you're driving to work somewhere. This is extended time, seeking God.

Because what happens in extended prayer, and focused prayer, is God begins to change your heart. He changes your heart. You don't want 36, 24, 36.

You'll deal with whatever, give me Proverbs 31. He changes your heart. You'll get that when you get home.

He changes the heart. And the woman, oh, I just want somebody who'd make \$300,000, and I don't have to work again, and we can get a chauffeur, and a maid, and then God changes the heart. Maybe it is good to be a mom.

You know, the stay-at-home mom is one of the hardest jobs on the planet? Oh, the society mocks it. I'd love a Fortune 500 CEO woman to go home and raise children. No recognition, no money, throw up, spit up, all this stuff, tantrums, and that's the hardest job on the planet.

We need to recognize that again. Where did that vanish? Where did that leave? Society. The culture.

Because we're listening to the culture. The culture says, I need to drive a BMW, make \$80,000 a year, my husband makes \$100, we'll live in this area, we'll have the kids over here. And why not just move to a simple place? Downscale, not upscale.

Live below your means. Afford what God can. And it's amazing, when you begin to honor God, He opens doors you never thought possible.

Never thought possible. My wife was working, when we first got married and she was pregnant, we were like, we just want to, you know, have her stay home. Lord, you've got to open some huge doors.

If He had time, I'd tell you about it, and He did. It's amazing what He does. Now, is everybody a stay-at-home mom? Of course not.

Am I trying to beat up on that? Absolutely not. Because there comes a time and a place where that might need to happen. I'm not judging that.

I'm just saying, don't let the culture influence you. Don't go down that road just because you want to keep up with the Joneses. Next, verse 16 identifies Rebecca verse 16 identifies Rebecca as, here's a word we don't say anymore, identifies Rebecca as a virgin.

Oh my goodness. 50 years ago that was wonderful, today it's mocked. Listen, you live in a culture where Tim Tebow is mocked and Bruce Jenner's idolized.

Come on, church, wake up. When are you going to stop being offended about the Word of God? When it says purity and wholeness and all these things, that's wonderful. It should be cherished, it should be fought for.

Not mocked. Bruce Jenner, just one woman of the year. I'm confused.

And I'm not ridiculing, I'm showing you a perverted and degenerate culture who has rejected God and they laugh at what God says is valued. I have never ever, ever met a girl or a boy who's a Christian now who actually doesn't regret a promiscuous lifestyle. Oh, you'll catch them at the right time.

Oh, I love partying, it's great. Catch them two years from now. Never, ever, ever, ever.

I've never met anybody. That's regret, it's called regret. They regret.

So see, the enemy says, come on in, enjoy. And then when you get in and now you live with regret and pain, and you say, oh my God, now I understand the Word of God. See, most people don't understand the Word of God until they went through life.

It's funny how even young adults, I'll go back to that. They'll read this now and then, cute little highlighters. I'll say this will be to you as dear as grabbing your safe when the house is on fire.

You'll grab this when you hit about 35. When you go through life. See, we know everything at 21, 22, 23.

I knew everything until God broke everything out of me in my 20s. I didn't know anything. So when God says sexual purity is fundamental in finding the right person.

Or being found by the right person. The Bible says, I want to keep you sexually pure so your spouse and you can be knitted together. Because if he or she doesn't protect your purity now while you're dating, you think they're going to be someone you can trust when you get married? Let me answer that for you.

No. Not at all. If he's a dog when you're single, he's a double dog when you get married.

Why? Because it only multiplies. It multiplies. And we become dissatisfied.

Watch somebody if they're not concerned with protecting this area. I'm not talking about slip ups. I mean, they're not concerned at all.

They could care less. They've got the porn star sticker on their car. Run for cover.

Just leave. You see, I'm done with you because this is such an important area. It's foundational.

It's really the foundation of going into the right marriage. If you want to hear God's voice, being sexually pure is up there with everything else. Because when you're not, it clouds your vision.

And as a believer, you know you shouldn't be doing something and you are. Now you're anxious. Now you're fearful.

Now you wonder if you're out of God's will. Now you're upset. Now I can't determine anything.

Why? Because that clouds your vision. Now here's the hope. I wasn't born yesterday.

I know that many people are not doing well in this area, especially in this culture. So I want to encourage you that God wants you to get back on track and say, listen, confess it, repent, do whatever it takes. Do whatever it takes and remain pure and let me now guide and direct you and rebuild and rebuild this relationship.

That's one thing I love about God. He's not saying, oh, you blew it. You're toast now.

I can't direct you. But if you get back into his will and back into that area where God can now direct. Because when you come to God and say, listen, Lord, we've been blowing it.

I love this person. I fell into this. We need to just not even kiss if you don't have to.

I mean, get radical. I'd rather please God than have my friends go, oh, that's weird. Because that same friend who says, oh, that's weird is probably going to be divorced in three years.

Does current statistics hold true? Because, again, it goes back to who we're listening to. And this is a very important area because it shapes everything else. Because once you start to compromise... Actually, I'll probably share this with you.

Some of you know him. Names or anything, but a friend of mine was on fire for God, got out of prison. And I got a four-page letter from him this week, and he's back in prison doing ten more years.

What started it? Met somebody, were married in God's eyes, went down this road, got in trouble, got back into alcohol, began using heroin, was sleeping out in the street, began stealing, now he's back in jail. Oh, Shane, come on. Well, no, that's how you open the door.

Because once you give up self-discipline in this area, there's no way you can give up self-discipline in this area and then remain disciplined in other spiritual disciplines. You can't. It's not possible.

You just open the floodgates. That's how this works. That's why it's so vital to have this area in check.

Especially as married, with pornography a click away, and having accountability, and software, and things that... I mean, how bad do you want it? How bad do you want protection? How bad do you want to fight for your marriage? It's what it boils down to. Interesting statistics I looked up. Somewhere around 80% of Christians who are engaged, or Christians in general, are engaged in premarital sex.

80%. And we wonder why the divorce rate is skyrocketing. We wonder why the church looks more like the world.

It's because you're going to Desperate Housewives, not Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. You're looking at MTV Spring Break instead of the Proverbs. We're allowing ourselves to be influenced... I don't even know

if those shows are even on.

MTV Spring Break. I was at a store one day, and they had MTV on. I cannot believe.

I cannot believe the garbage that young adults are watching. Like, everything God calls profane, abomination, rude, they just glorify it. Kids just love it.

I'm like, what is this? MTV? It's amazing. I can't believe it. We've went from I Love Lucy and Leave it to Beaver to Queer Eye for the Straight Guy and dating shows and reality shows that are a stench in the nostrils of a righteous holy God.

Everybody says, I don't care, it's no big deal. Yes, it is. Yes, it is.

They became an abomination like the thing they love. Israel forgot her maker. Oh, America, church in America, you are forgetting your maker.

You are forgetting things like purity and righteousness and holiness. You might mock those words, but those words are foundational to seeking God and knowing Him. That's why many people can't sing that song about God being their father.

It's a bunch of lyrics up there because they've never experienced Him. When the song says, I've heard a thousand stories about who you are, but it's a whisper in the night that tells me who you really are. Some of us can say, Amen.

Amen. Daddy, help me. It's okay.

I told the first service that. It's okay to say, Daddy, help me and sing that song. Oh, how I love Him.

Daddy, help me. I mean, my son comes and tells me, why can't we tell God? The minute you feel in your heart you can't say, Daddy, help me, is the minute pride has come in and you think you're the master of your own destiny and the captain of your own ship. I think it's very healthy for men to say that.

Dad, would you help me? Help me with this. I can't do it. And that's a broken and contrite heart.

That's what God uses. God uses that to shape us. Number six, don't rush.

Don't rush. Wait for confirmation. What does everybody want to do? Rush.

What did I say? My biological clock is tick, tick, tick, tick. I'm almost 29. I can't believe it.

You know, and we rush, we rush, we rush into things that we should be waiting on. Verse 21 states that the servant watched her in silence. The servant watched her in silence, wondering whether or not she was the one that the Lord intended him to meet.

So in deciding whether to date or to continue dating someone, take time and observe their attitude and behavior around others. Are they critical, argumentative, and defensive? Give yourself time to observe their disposition. Remember that most will be on their best behavior at least initially.

The first two weeks, they love kids. Within six months, they can't stand them. What happened? It's called putting on an act.

Okay? They love cats, too, the first couple weeks. And then a couple months later, where'd the cat go? I don't know. Windows open.

But watch. Watch how a man treats his mother. And watch how a girl treats her dad.

And you'll have a pretty good indication of how they're going to treat you. What do they post on Facebook? You guys are fortunate today I didn't have this. Instagram, it spells everything.

If the shirt's down to here and they got a tequila, whatever in one hand. Red flag. Red flag.

All these glamour shots are posing. Glamour, look at me, look at me. It's self-indulgent.

There's not a heart for God. It's a heart for the world. Look.

Use wisdom. The problem is we don't want to use wisdom because we're mesmerized. We're lost.

I want that and I don't care what it costs. Oh, you will care what it costs at some point. The old saying is true.

You either pay now or you pay later, but either way you're going to pay. So you either seek, men seek a Proverbs 31 woman, or at least who's going that direction. And a woman should seek a guy who says, listen, I want purity.

I'm going to protect your purity. I'm going to protect mine because I love God. And we're going to honour him.

I'm going to go to church because I want to go to church. You see, this is so elementary, but we get so distorted by who we listen to. Who's influencing you? This is number seven.

It goes back to what I talked about at the beginning, the final point. Who's influencing you and who's influencing them? This is the key. This is the key in dating relationships or being single.

Who's really influencing you? And what I read earlier, don't let light and darkness, don't let an unbeliever be yoked together with a believer. I also want to encourage you, if you are an unbeliever, if you've never embraced God's gracious gift of repentance and salvation through his son, I want to encourage you. That's how you get out of the darkness into the light.

You can't just do better, try this, or get baptized or be a good person. None of that works. None of that works.

The only thing that works is what I read initially. God desires a broken and contrite heart. That he will not cast away.

So you come to God and you say, Lord, I repent of my sin. I repent of my sin. I need you.

Father, I need you. I can't do this. I need you.

I need your son. I need your sacrifice. I mean, those songs we sing just sometimes today, cut to the heart.

When it talks about God sent his son to die for you, to die for you, to die for me. I don't know about you, but that does something to me. And I thought, I was thinking, would I send my son to die for me? Heck no.

Come here, you're not going anywhere. So how could God send his only son to die for me? Why does it make sense? Because I don't have that kind of love. The world would be lost if it was up to me.

My little son going to the cross? No, you better have plan B. That's not happening. But God sent his only son mocked on a cross, ridiculed, bloodstained, naked, beaten beyond recognition for the sins of the world. I couldn't do that.

How does he do that? Does he love the world more than Christ? No, it's one. God the Father, God the Son, the Holy Spirit are one. The triune nature of God, don't try to understand it because you won't be able to.

Understand that God basically sent himself to die in place. Jesus Christ was God, flesh, in the flesh. The Bible calls it propitiation.

He absorbed the wrath of God on the cross. God said, I'll send my only son. I'll send the perfect sacrifice to die for your sin.

How we can sing these songs without any emotion makes no sense to me. It completely baffles me. The reason is because we haven't really grasped what it means.

When a person has really been changed by God, they have to sing. They have to worship. So I just want to encourage you, if you've never got your heart in that right spot, if you're an unbeliever, if you haven't believed, then now's the time to repent and put your trust and faith in Christ and Christ alone.

If you're an unbeliever and you've drifted, now it's time to come back. Come back to the anchor. Come back to the only solid rock that holds everything together.

Amazing grace, my chains are gone. What chains? The chains that bound me to sin, death, and the grave. They're gone.

Christ paid the price. I was blind but now I see. Blind from what? Spiritually blind.

Spiritually blind but now I see the things of God. Now I see how right his truth is. That's something to rejoice over.

But that's his final point. You have to ask, who's influencing them and who's influencing you? And look at it closely. Is it God or the world? And I hadn't read the story in about ten years and I came across it this week and I want to share it with you.

It's a little lengthy but bear with me. It says, when Matt was just four years old, his parents introduced him to a new friend. He was excited because he had someone to play with and they were happy because their friend could babysit when they were busy.

As the years went by, Matt and his friend spent countless hours together playing video games, Minecraft probably, and watching sports. In time, things changed. His friend began to use profanity and showed disrespect to his family.

Although his mother and father disapproved, what could they do? His friend was like a family member now. He taught Matt how to dress, how to act, and even how to treat others. And although his parents wouldn't admit it, he taught them a thing or two as well.

Sadly, they listened to his advice. Once Matt reached his teen years, his friend's influence was obvious. Matt spent more time with him than with his family.

Since Matt's dad was always gone, his friend taught him how to be a father and a husband. And since his mom was busy most of the time, he offered to teach Matt about women as well and how to treat them. At fourteen, Matt's friend introduced him to sex.

He explained how it wasn't a bad thing. Everybody was doing it, even with same-sex partners. At this point, Matt's parents became upset and warned Matt not to see his friend again.

But he couldn't end the relationship. He'd been his close companion for the past decade. Surprisingly, Matt's parents allowed his friend to continue to live in their home.

After all, they enjoyed his company and didn't really want to see him leave. During the years that followed, Matt's friend introduced him to alcohol, drugs, and pornography, and again assured him that everybody was doing it. Matt could see his friend's point.

He showed him millions of people that agreed with his lifestyle. When Matt grew older, he looked back over the years and saw that the friendship should never have continued. He believed that his friend's influence encouraged his father's affair, his mom's problem with drugs, and ultimately contributed to their divorce.

His friend's impact on his life was just as devastating. Today, with full knowledge, October, right now, today, with full knowledge of the damage done, Matt still allows his friend to live with him, and amazingly, he still listens to his advice. Matt's friend has a name.

It's television. It's the media. He has a name, folks.

You say, Shane, come on. No, that's true. As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he.

He has a name. Media. Facebook.

It has a face. Whatever's influencing you, God's Word of the world, folks, there is no gray area, because when there's gray area, it's a dirty area, and it's a wrong area. We all struggle.

We all fumble. You think I've mastered this perfectly? No. The world is tugging at me every chance it gets.

I'm trying to fast today, and Panda Express has called my name since 4.30 this afternoon. So you ask me next week. That'll be good accountability.

My point is the world is trying to pull you, and you've got to be pulled. And that's the only way marriages are going to survive. That's the only way, as a single, you're going to find the right person, because I believe, truly, I believe that you have to be the right person to find the right person.

It's amazing. There's the weekend, I'm sure, there's 10,000 drunk guys in Vegas right now. If I could just find a Christian woman, boy, I'd get back on track.

You're never going to find her. You're going to end up with a basketball star and a brothel. That's how it happens.

Don't get me started. Don't even get me started on that. He's a hero now.

Everyone wants to interview this guy. There's no words to even say. Ridiculous.

Is there a better word than that? It's unbelievable what our society promotes.

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