

FOCUS^{ON} THE FAMILY[®]

TONY EVANS
KINGDOM
SINGLE

LIVING COMPLETE
AND FULLY FREE



TYNDALE

Tyndale House Publishers, Inc.
Carol Stream, Illinois

Kingdom Single: Living Complete and Fully Free

© 2018 Tony Evans. All rights reserved.

A Focus on the Family book published by Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., Carol Stream, Illinois 60188

Focus on the Family and the accompanying logo and design are federally registered trademarks of Focus on the Family, 8605 Explorer Drive, Colorado Springs, CO 80920.

TYNDALE and Tyndale’s quill logo are registered trademarks of Tyndale House Publishers, Inc.

No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means—electronic, mechanical, photocopy, recording, or otherwise—without prior written permission of Focus on the Family.

All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise indicated, are taken from the *New American Standard Bible*.^{*} Copyright © 1960, 1962, 1963, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1975, 1977, 1995 by The Lockman Foundation. Used by permission. (www.Lockman.org).

Scripture quotations marked (HCSB) have been taken from the *Holman Christian Standard Bible*. Copyright © 1999, 2000, 2002, 2003, 2009 by Holman Bible Publishers. Used by permission. Holman Christian Standard Bible, Holman CSB, and HCSB are federally registered trademarks of Holman Bible Publishers.

Scripture quotations marked (NIV) are taken from the *Holy Bible, New International Version*,^{*} NIV.^{*} Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc.^{*} Used by permission of Zondervan. All rights reserved worldwide. (www.zondervan.com) The “NIV” and “New International Version” are trademarks registered in the United States Patent and Trademark Office by Biblica, Inc.^{*}

Scripture quotations marked (NLT) are taken from the *Holy Bible, New Living Translation*, copyright © 1996, 2004, 2015 by Tyndale House Foundation. Used by permission of Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., Carol Stream, Illinois 60188. All rights reserved.

Scripture quotations marked (KJV) are taken from the *Holy Bible, King James Version*.

People’s names and certain details of their stories have been changed to protect the privacy of the individuals involved. However, the facts of what happened and the underlying principles have been conveyed as accurately as possible.

Cover design by Sally Dunn
Cover photo by Sally Dunn

For information about special discounts for bulk purchases, please contact Tyndale House Publishers at csresponse@tyndale.com, or call 1-800-323-9400.

ISBN 978-1-58997-951-2

Printed in the United States of America

24 23 22 21 20 19 18
7 6 5 4 3 2 1

This book is lovingly dedicated to my sisters-in-law—Ruth Ann Cannings, Bernice Cannings, and Elizabeth Cannings—and to my special niece Clarise, for their conscientious review and input on this book. Thank you for your investment in my life, my ministry, and my family.

CONTENTS

PART I

THE CONCEPT OF A KINGDOM SINGLE

1	The Completeness of Singles.....	3
2	The Calling of Singles	21
3	The Confidence of Singles	41
4	The Command of Singles	51
5	The Contentment of Singles	67

PART II

THE CHALLENGES OF A KINGDOM SINGLE

6	Winning the Spiritual Battle	89
7	Getting Help from Heaven	105
8	The Power of Intimacy	123
9	Single but Not Alone	137

PART III

THE CONCERNS OF A KINGDOM SINGLE

10	Seeking a Mate	153
11	Singles and Sex, Part 1	167
12	Singles and Sex, Part 2	185
13	Single Again	199
14	Single Parenting	209
	Conclusion	221
	Appendix: Singles and Same-Sex Attraction	223
	Acknowledgments	227
	Notes.....	229

PART I

THE CONCEPT
OF A
KINGDOM
SINGLE

THE COMPLETENESS OF SINGLES

An omelet is only as good as the eggs you put into it.

That's probably not how you expected a book on singleness to begin, but stick with me for a moment. When you cook an omelet and you crack open two rotten eggs, you will wind up with a nasty-tasting omelet. Even if one egg is good and the other egg is rotten, you will still wind up with a nasty-tasting omelet. The good egg is not going to make the bad egg better. No, the bad egg is going to contaminate the good egg.

Simply put: One bad egg destroys a good egg and causes the omelet to become inedible.

What does cooking an omelet have to do with singleness?

Everything.

Far too often, the discussions surrounding the topic of being single focus primarily on the future aspect of finding a mate. They focus on how to “wait well” until the joining together of the two “eggs” creates a marriage. In fact, most singles I talk to, counsel, or pastor are so keyed in on finding their future spouse, praying for marriage, or looking for a romantic partner that they altogether miss the benefits, purposes, and importance of

singleness. They miss the critical aspects of cultivating a healthy life themselves while also setting their standards high enough for their future spouse. When the benefits, purposes, and importance of singleness are skipped in a person's developmental process, you wind up with a rotten marriage later on.

Thus, my goal in this book is not to advise you on how to wait well. No, my desire is to completely shift your thinking out of the waiting cycle. This is because, from my experience in counseling hundreds of singles over the years, emphasizing a "waiting well" mentality leads to a multiplicity of unintended—but very real—consequences.

To encourage someone to live in a posture of waiting for something or someone places that person in a perpetual state of conscious want, need, and future-oriented thinking. It produces a mentality of lack. In thinking that way, the individual runs the risk of missing out on the *now*.

If this describes *you*, you run the risk of selling yourself short during your present. You run the risk of settling for less than the best in a rush to make the future happen sooner than it ought. You run the risk of exchanging a life you passionately embrace one day at a time for a life where you simply exist as you look for the next part to come along. And that is not what I want for you.

That's not what God wants for you.

Kingdom single, you are not merely to learn how to wait well.

Now, don't close these pages fearing what I might say next. I'm not going to walk you down the all-too-familiar path for singles, telling you that "God is your husband" and that this truth should be enough. I understand singleness is not a permanent calling for most people. In fact, most surveys reveal that roughly 90 percent of all singles *want* to get married. Singleness is not some super-spiritual status chosen by everyone. I realize that many people are single due to the breakdown in our culture and a dismissal of family values. Divorce, selfishness, a consumerist mind-set, and overall relational dysfunction in families of origin and social circles

have led to a cultural shift that has delayed the onset of marriage and availability of healthy (mentally and spiritually), stable marital options.

Yes, God is your husband (Isaiah 54:5), but that doesn't mean He brings you flowers, opens your car door, fixes your garbage disposal, keeps your feet warm at night, helps you find your contact lens when you drop it, or gives you hugs when you feel vulnerable and alone. To say that God is your husband from a spiritual standpoint is true. But to say you have no remaining physical or emotional needs, whether as a man or a woman, is naïve.

One of my closest friends over the course of my life started out as my professor and mentor. His name was Zane Hodges. Zane passed away at the full age of seventy-six after decades of service to God as a seminary professor, Bible scholar, pastor, and author. Zane loved his work and dedicated his life to it and to the people he shepherded. Zane was also never married.

I'll never forget the somber, quiet tone he used one day in the latter years of his life when he told me: "Tony, there is a loss that comes with being single. With all the spiritual goodness and profits that surround it, there is this reality of a deep loss when you're single. It is a space that isn't filled; there is something you feel that is missing because there are physical and relational needs that are just not met."

Zane's words struck me with sadness. But then he continued, "That loss, though, does not have to negate your being content."

That's the dichotomy. There are chasms that exist in singleness that



Living as a successful, satisfied single ... comes in learning how to walk that tightrope of waiting for the future yet also fully embracing the present, or longing for more yet still delighting if more simply never arrives.



can't simply be wished away or filled with ice cream, activities, shopping, addictions, or even church attendance. There is a polarity that produces real, felt struggles. Living as a successful, satisfied single will not come without intentionality. But it can come. It comes in learning how to walk that tightrope of waiting for the future yet also fully embracing the present, or longing for more yet still delighting if more simply never arrives.

It's not easy to do, I'm sure. And this won't be an easy book to read. It certainly hasn't been easy to write. Keep in mind that everyone is different, and some things I say may or may not apply to you. God's plans for people's lives are as varied as the wildflowers in a field. That being so, some things may hit you closer to home than others, while other things may hit someone else closer to home. Yet the overarching general principles threaded throughout ought to provide a framework upon which stability, strength, and satisfaction can be woven into the unique tapestry of your own life.

Show Me the Marriage

Let me return to the subject of eggs.

In the 1999 hit movie *Runaway Bride*, Maggie Carpenter (played by Julia Roberts) struggled with making it all the way to the altar. Engaged multiple times, she would break off an engagement shortly before (or even on) the wedding day. The movie looked at the different reasons this might have happened to her, arriving at the conclusion that Maggie simply didn't know how she liked her own eggs prepared.

Of course, that's a simplistic explanation to a deep issue, but the bottom line was that Maggie found herself acquiescing to the likes, preferences, and desires of each man she became engaged to, all the while never quite knowing her own. When asked one day how she wanted her eggs cooked, she didn't have an answer.

In short, she didn't know her own passions, skills, dreams, and

preferences because she was so focused on one day fulfilling the dream (and pressure) of being a wife. It wasn't until Maggie identified who *she* was and truly became *Maggie* that she was able to marry.

This film's story line actually goes against the norm of how most movies portray the romantic relationship. Moving away from eggs and omelets and over to football and sports agents, we find the more typical scene displayed in the box-office hit *Jerry Maguire*.

If you're like most Americans, you probably know by heart the scene I'm about to describe. Tom Cruise's character stands in a room full of women, seated comfortably on couches and chairs, as he interrupts their book club evening with his emotional expression of love. As tears threaten to wet his cheeks, he says to his love interest (played by Renee Zellweger) standing across the room, "We live in a cynical world, and we work in a business of tough competitors." He then pauses as the room draws and holds a collective breath. He continues: "I love you. You . . . complete . . . me."

Starting to say something else, he is quickly interrupted by Renee's character, who softly and sweetly replies, "Shut up. Just shut up. You had me at hello."

The two characters then make their way toward each other as the music builds and they become locked in each other's arms. The supporting cast cries and sniffs on cue, the romantic couple are now one, and countless millions of people absorb a distorted view of singleness and romantic relationships while applauding all the same.

This scene and its message (not the takeaway principle in *Runaway Bride*) is the overarching theme of relationships in modern media. It appears over and over again, whether in movies, songs, talk shows, or articles. This theme spells out the purported purpose of romance and marriage, according to popular culture. Which makes it no big surprise that far too many people continue living in perpetual wait-mode—waiting for the *Jerry Maguire* moment of finding that special someone to whom they can finally say, "You complete me."

But that statement is fundamentally wrong. It is also fiercely frightening, because when one incomplete person marries another incomplete person, you wind up with two incomplete people living together in what most



A kingdom single may want to be married, but the difference is that he or she doesn't need to be married to feel complete and whole.



often results in a hot mess. Don't lose your pursuit of completeness because of your desire to be married.

If you are not yet complete, please don't get married.

Many unmarried people are looking for marriage to achieve something it cannot do, namely fix their broken and incomplete selves. Often that means getting attached to another broken and incomplete unmar-

ried person, creating defective and unfulfilling relationships. A kingdom single may want to be married, but the difference is that he or she doesn't need to be married to feel complete and whole. If you need to be married, you have not yet fully understood or embraced your status as a kingdom single.

Far too many couples are married and yet still feel alone because they never fully knew what it meant to be fully single. So they are grasping for something both in and from their spouse that their spouse often lacks the capacity to provide. The nature of marriage is not merely what you're *getting from* someone else, but also what you're *giving to* someone else. And what you should be giving your spouse is a completely whole single Christian, not half of one who is incomplete.

Friend, you are not fully ready to be married until you're a fully functioning kingdom single. Otherwise, like most people, all you're doing is bringing your incompleteness into a relationship, expecting that relationship to accomplish what it is unable to do. All the marriage will do is reveal that you never fully learned what it meant to be single. To put it succinctly, you are complete in Christ with or without marriage.

If you're looking for a romantic partner to complete you as a kingdom single, you really don't understand what Jesus Christ has already done. Because in Him, you are as complete as complete comes. Now, you may not realize that truth. You may not identify with that truth. And if you don't, you're not living out the full benefits of that truth. But none of those things makes the truth any less true. Colossians 2:10 tells us, "In Him you have been made complete, and He is the head over all rule and authority." To think otherwise is to make the institution of marriage, and your desire for a marriage partner, an idol. And idolatry is sin.

Friend, Jesus Christ completes you. That's the truth. Thus, what a romantic partner can provide must remain outside of that, in addition to it, or alongside it. He or she cannot complete you, because Jesus already has. If you are not aware or mindful of this reality, there's a danger that you will be expecting too much of another human being, asking him or her to be or do something that only God Himself can be and do.

Far too often, we try to transfer what we see in movies to our real lives. But that places pressure on us and the other people in our lives to live up to a standard we were never designed to fulfill.

As you grow in your understanding, discovery, and acceptance of your completeness in Jesus Christ, you will experience the victory, authority, and intimacy He has already secured for you in Him. You will then be freed up to experience other relationships at a level they were designed for.

When God created Eve so that Adam would not be "alone" (Genesis 2:18), the word used to describe what He gave to Adam was a "helper" (Hebrew: *ezer*, meaning "a strong help") who was "suitable" (Hebrew: *neged*, meaning "before, about, behind, in the presence of"). Eve wasn't created because Adam lacked anything in and of himself. In fact, Adam had to give up a part of himself in the process of gaining Eve. Nor was Eve designed to complete something missing within Adam, or even within herself. Rather, she was created to come alongside him (and he alongside her) in this thing called life in order to fulfill a kingdom assignment. And just

as the word *neged* indicates, sometimes that would mean “before,” while other times it may mean “behind,” and still others simply “in the presence or proximity of.”

Relational issues arise when the focus of either person (or both) shifts from God to each other as the deciding factor, influencer, or even source of completion. That’s exactly what happened in the Garden of Eden, after all, which led to the Fall.

Only when you understand and embrace the truth that Christ Himself completes you will you be able to view any current or potential relationship for what it can actually provide—a companion to come alongside you. You’ll be amazed at how fulfilling and satisfying a relationship can be when expectations are normalized, the benefit of the doubt (coupled with grace) becomes natural, and you both look to God to lead, fill, satisfy, and complete you.

Imagine the strain and drain a relationship suffers when one or both people look to the other as their source of completion. Modern psychiatry might call that codependency, not love. Keep in mind, no human being is equipped to offer you what it cost the God of the universe—His own Son’s life—to both win and secure. So the first step in living with a kingdom mind-set is understanding that by Christ’s sitting next to the Father on the throne, Christ has declared both His ability and His right to complete you.

What does it mean to live as a complete single?

Our English word *single* comes from the joining of the Latin word *singulus* and the Old French word *simplus*. Together, they become more than what most people understand the cultural, contemporary term *single* to mean. Rather than “alone,” “unattached,” “unmarried,” or “by oneself,” a more literal translation of these two original words would be “simply unique” or “uniquely simple.” Both of those better illustrate the biblical concept of singleness. Other defining terms attached to the original words are “singular,” “complete,” and “whole.”

God never established singleness to be a burdensome, lonesome,

pointless, and frustrating existence, as so many have falsely labeled it today. Rather, it is the very “simplicity” of the single life (which we will go into more deeply in Scripture later) that frees a person to fully live out his or her own “uniqueness” and “completeness.”

Singleness positions people to become their best version of themselves as no other relational role can. God does not want singles to look to marriage as a way to stop being *single*. People are always to maintain their wholeness, completeness, and uniqueness as individuals, even (and especially) when they get married.

Unfortunately, that is rarely what’s communicated to Christian singles today, either verbally or nonverbally. The church is largely at fault for making singles feel like second-class and incomplete citizens,

as most of the events, activities, small groups, and formal messages focus primarily on married couples and families, with little or no application for singles. Yet singles make up roughly half of our entire American adult population. Any way you slice it, nearly half of an entire country is a huge portion of the country. The statistics in the church are similar, if not even more slanted toward singles.

With such a great number of singles in America and in the church, why is so little said on the subject from the pulpit? I’ll conjecture that it may have something to do with the fact that nearly every senior pastor is married. And if a pastor becomes divorced at some point in his career, he will typically resign from the ministry. Thus, you have an entire layer of spiritual leadership living in the context of marriage while overseeing the development of half (if not more) of their congregation in an entirely different context.

I can say from firsthand experience that a pastor who happens to be



*Singleness positions
people to become
their best version of
themselves as no other
relational role can.*



married is always on dangerous ground when he approaches the issue of singleness. Invariably he hears the accusation, “Pastor, you don’t understand. You’ve been married for so long. You don’t know the struggles I face as a single!” I’ve heard this myself more times than I care to remember.

And it’s natural for people to feel that a married pastor cannot relate to them because he hasn’t experienced what they’re experiencing. However, the truth of the Word transcends our experiences. I have never been an alcoholic, for example, but I can tell you what the Bible has to say about it. I can speak because God has spoken. I have never struggled with fear or anxiety, but I can deliver other people from it. I’ve been married for more than forty-five years, yes, but I also know what God says about singleness and the topics that directly correlate to it. Add to that decades of counseling singles and I feel prepared to teach on this subject in a way that is compassionate, understanding, empowering, and empathetic. Not only was I single before I got married, but I’ve also taken the time to listen to those who are, or have been, and I’ve thoroughly studied God’s Word on the subject.

Nevertheless, I understand the need of many of you to hear from someone who knows firsthand what the single lifestyle is really like. That’s why I’ve chosen to borrow heavily from the words of someone who was single for a long time. I’m talking about the apostle Paul.

The apostle Paul personally understood the strengths and successes of the single lifestyle far better than do the social commentators of our day. His inspired words in the New Testament present us with a challenge that cuts across the grain of our society. According to Paul:

Being single is a very good thing (see 1 Corinthians 7:26).

Yes, there’s a good deal of controversy surrounding that concept, even though it’s every bit as biblical as John 3:16. But make no mistake about what Paul is saying: *If you are single, you’re in the best possible spiritual position.*

Now, this may be contrary to what you've heard about singleness or even what you feel about it, but God's Word often runs contrary to popular opinion. God never set out to be popular. He set out to be God. And God says it is highly beneficial for a person to be single. God is not opposed to marriage; He created it, and it has its own purposes. But when comparing the two for which state allows for the understanding and fulfilling of one's purpose, being single wins.

Whether you want to be single or married, let that truth sink in for a moment. Let the high value God places on your status assure you that your life is not a mistake and this season does not have to be disappointing.

Singleness is not a second-class status. It's not to be a perpetual waiting period. Singleness is a unique platform and position provided to you for great enjoyment, accomplishment, discovery, exploration, freedom, and meaning. To not maximize your season of singleness because you're so focused on waiting for marriage or disappointed in the present is to waste your God-given gift. Never miss out on today's open doors for those you are hoping will open tomorrow.

❧

*Never miss out on
today's open doors
for those you are
hoping will open
tomorrow.*

It Started with a Single

God did not create Adam and Eve as a married couple. Rather, they were created as adult singles first. In fact, the first single person God created was a man. Far too often in the church, we hear that all the messages and events on singleness are aimed at women. But when the Bible is our source of learning, we see numerous examples of God's using single men as models for how kingdom singles should live. Jesus, Daniel, Joseph, Paul, Isaac, and the three Hebrew men in the furnace are good examples. However, the

principles of singleness in these pages transcend gender, whether the person from whose life we derive a standard is male or female.

From the beginning of time, though, God initiated singleness by first creating a man. What we learn from this example is that God gave Adam a personal relationship with Him first. He gave him a calling and His instruction prior to giving him a mate. Every single man, in particular, should thus prioritize these areas during his time of singleness, so that if and when it's time to get married, he can offer his future bride a kingdom man.

Genesis 2:18 gives us our first look at what it means to fully live as a unique, complete single. We read, "Then the LORD God said, 'It is not good for the man to be alone; I will make him a helper suitable for him.'" We often misread that verse, assuming God is saying that it's not good for man to be single. But He doesn't say that. He says it's not good for man to be *alone*. There's a difference. When you look at this concept, you must distinguish between being single and being alone and not equate the two.

On the dresser as I write this chapter is my key ring. On my key ring are two different keys. One is round and one is oblong. One key goes to a door at home, while the other is a master key for the doors at church. Each key has been created with indentations and protrusions sufficient to unlock the door it was designed to unlock.

To use each key does not require the help of the other key. Each key functions wholly on its own. In other words, these two different keys are completely independent of each other.

Yet as I mentioned, I also have a key ring. And while both keys function independently of each other, they are both likewise connected to each other through a ring. Putting keys on a ring doesn't change the nature of the keys. The keys remain as they were before without the ring because they were already complete. All the ring did was hook up two complete keys so that they could now remain connected in the same vicinity.

Friend, if you don't view yourself as already complete as a single, then you will function as an incomplete single and thus be subject to illegiti-

mate bondage because you have a wrong perception of yourself. God said it is not good that man should be alone. Not that it is not good that man is single.

Under God's rule in the Garden, singleness meant to be complete, whole, and unique. This is why God was the one who determined Adam was alone. Adam was not initially aware of any concept of aloneness. That's because until God told him, he wasn't alone. Likewise, God doesn't want you to equate being single with being alone. God wanted Adam to be completely fulfilled in Him before He gave him a mate. A mate became a bonus.

Likewise, when God created Eve as a single adult woman, she didn't open her eyes and shriek, "Oh, no, I'm single! What's going to become of me?" Rather, God had to bring her to Adam. Before that happened, she was already complete in who she was.

God did not begin humanity with a married couple. He began with two singles. And remember, Adam got his mate while he was sleeping, not panicking.

In fact, Adam had even been given a crucial, divine assignment to fulfill before he was provided with a "helper." Genesis 2:15 says, "Then the LORD God took the man and put him into the garden of Eden to cultivate it and keep it." God also assigned him to name the animals in it (Genesis 2:19, 20a). Thus, before Adam ever became attached to Eve, he was called upon to maximize his full potential by turning the Garden into an organized, productive place.

This means that the key to your completeness as a single is rooted first and foremost in your calling, not your sexuality. Because Adam was so busy as a kingdom single doing kingdom work, God had to tell him he needed a helper. Likewise, as you're busy fulfilling your kingdom role and



God did not begin humanity with a married couple. He began with two singles.



purpose, you should be fully content until God changes your status, or even if He doesn't.

Before there was an Eve, Adam utilized his intellectual capacity in naming the animals. Not only that, but whatever he chose to name an animal, God backed him on it. God supported and blessed Adam's work as a single. Thus, Adam truly was a *kingdom* single. A kingdom single is defined as *an unmarried Christian who is committed to fully and freely maximizing his or her completeness under the rule of God and the lordship of Jesus Christ.*

Which leads us to the question on the floor: What made Adam a kingdom single so that he could fully and freely live out his completeness under God? A few principles come out of his story that can help answer that question. First, Adam possessed a clearly defined divine identity. Genesis 1:26 says, "Then God said, 'Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness.'"

Likewise, every man and every woman possesses this image of God, because we are all made in His image. You have a divine stamp on your soul, which means your identity is to be rooted first and foremost in your relationship with the One in whose image you're made. You are never to define yourself by a relationship to someone else, because when you're defined by another person, you have created a competing image to God. Not only is that image competing, but it's also corrupt. What makes you a unique and special single is that you're created in the image of God. Your connection to God and not another person should give you your ultimate sense of worth and significance.

One of my most difficult jobs as a pastor is to get people to understand that their ultimate commitment is to God, not people. Your identity is in God, not in others. It's not even in what you do. The Bible condemns idolatry in numerous places, but rarely do we, in our Western mind-sets, consider another person to be an idol. Yet an idol is any person, place, or thing that you look to above or in place of God's rightful position in your time,

talents, thoughts, and choices. If you're looking to another person as your identity, meaning, purpose, or source, you have an idol—even if that other person is a future mate you haven't even met yet.

You were uniquely and specifically created to mirror the identity of the Creator Himself. He is your source, purpose, meaning, and identity. That being so, no human being and nothing else can ever possibly complete you. You are complete as you are. You are whole, made in the image of God Himself.

One of the first things that will help you mentally to embrace your wholeness is to begin to define yourself as God defines you. Don't let the devil carry out identity theft on your singleness. Nothing else can define you. Not what your mom said, nor your dad, nor even what has been done to you or you have done yourself. You can be defined only by your identity with God, which means you are a blood-bought child of the King, with royalty flowing through your veins. You are an heir to the kingdom, with a purpose that extends beyond yourself. You are whole. You are unique. You are complete.

Another principle that comes from Adam's story is that he was given divine instruction to freely eat of the trees of the garden. Far too often, we focus on the one tree Adam was instructed to avoid. But Genesis 2:16 says, "The LORD God commanded the man, saying, 'From any tree of the garden you may eat freely.'" This was an instruction to a single man. And it wasn't a suggestion; it was a command. God commanded Adam, meaning Adam was supposed to do this. It wasn't up for discussion or negotiation. If he were to operate under the Lord God, that would be how he was to roll. He was commanded to freely eat and enjoy all that was available to him.

That's a lot of freedom. I define biblical freedom as *the release from illegitimate bondage so that you can make the choice to maximize your potential*. Adam had the entire known world open to him for enjoyment, barring one tree. Yes, there was that one restriction, but his freedom was a lot bigger than the restriction. In fact, the first command ever given to humanity was

(to put it in everyday language), “Enjoy yourself.” Why? Because a kingdom single is free—free to maximize the potential of the gift of life itself.

Friend, from a biblical standpoint, you should be living it up as a single. Adam was supposed to be living it up as a single. He was supposed to be spending so much time having fun in the garden, because there was so much given to him that he was commanded to freely enjoy.

Being all you were created to be and fully living your life is a command. You’d better enjoy yourself. You’d better express yourself. You’d better be all you can be, because it’s a command. So if you’re a boring, stuck-at-home, not-enjoying-life single, you’re disobeying God—literally



*So if you’re a boring,
stuck-at-home, not-
enjoying-life single,
you’re disobeying God.*



disobeying Him and setting yourself up for temptation on the one tree you’re not supposed to mess with.

The purpose of the restriction was crucial to Adam’s maximizing his completeness as a kingdom single. It was a perpetual reminder that he was not autonomous. He was not to determine good and evil or right and wrong inde-

pendently of God. Only with the restriction could he enjoy and maximize the massive amount of freedom God made available to him.

Likewise, God restricts us in order to liberate us. Just as the boundary lines on a tennis court are there to provide a framework within which to play, God’s boundaries give us the ability to fully and freely maximize our lives. Without the boundaries on a tennis court, there could be no game. Without the sidelines on a football field, there would be chaos.

Rather than view God’s boundaries as a negative, therefore, seek to see what they actually provide—the ability to enjoy all He has provided within a context of peace and order. You have been given the opportunity to fully and freely live all your life to its highest potential and enjoyment as a single. To not do so is to belittle God’s gift of life. Yes, there are boundaries as a

single, but when you shift your eyes from the boundaries to the playing field, you'll see that it is so much more than you ever realized before.

What Satan likes to do with singles is the same thing he did with Adam and Eve. In getting them to focus on the one tree they couldn't have (the boundary line), he led them to miss out on all the trees they could have (the playing field). Satan loves to get singles to focus on the one thing they don't have (usually marriage, or it could even be sex), and they wind up missing out on maximizing, experiencing, and enjoying all they do have.

Yet one of the most beautiful things about singleness is that you are fully free.

If you could be a fly on the wall of my office the numerous times I counsel married couples, you would hear the same word I hear over and over and over again: *Trapped*. I can't tell you how many times I've been asked to help married couples not feel so trapped. One husband came to me after only six months of marriage, already saying he felt trapped and wanted out.

Kingdom single, never undervalue the gift of freedom you now have to fully live, because freedom is a gift worth more than you probably realize. Enjoy your freedom. Use your freedom wisely. Maximize your freedom and the kingdom authority that comes with it. Embrace your freedom. And discover all you can do in this season of life to become your best version of yourself. When you view freedom and completeness through the lens of God's love for you, you will truly be living as a kingdom single. Remember, a kingdom single is an unmarried Christian who is committed to fully and freely maximizing his or her completeness under the rule of God. It is God's intention for you to be single and satisfied under His authority.

You will know you're truly a kingdom single when you reach that point where, even if you want to be married someday, you don't *need* to be. There's nothing wrong with wanting to marry at some point (which was

God's ultimate plan for single people before sin entered the world). But if you're a kingdom single, you don't have to be married to feel complete and whole.

God wants every unmarried Christian to have and be fulfilled in what He gave Adam and Eve as singles, namely, His image and the divine identity within it so they would mirror God's spiritual reality. He also gave them His presence so they would live all of life in fellowship with Him. He gave them His purpose so they would do the work He had given them to do. In addition, He gave them His instructions so they would operate under divine direction and not merely by human reasoning and rationale.

As a kingdom single, you also have a divine self-image and a divinely ordained purpose to live out in fellowship with God under the authority of His divine revelation. Only when this is taking place at its fullest are you fully ready (emotionally and spiritually) to be married. Only kingdom singles can ever hope to enjoy a kingdom marriage.

Returning to our egg illustration, I'll acknowledge, like most people, that two good eggs joined together can make for a tasty omelet. Marriage can be wonderful, yes. But a single egg served over easy, sunny side up, or scrambled can be just as wonderful. Singleness affords you the unique opportunity to determine and discover what kind of eggs you truly enjoy most.