



Strength of youth

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The seventh commandment and the single life

Previous article in this series: [January 15, 2019, p. 187.](#)

In my last article I addressed the sin of pornography. Warnings concerning the sin and our calling with regard to it were also brought. Even though it was pornography that was addressed, the instruction, warnings, and calling that were given can be applied more broadly to any sexual sin.

But the question may well be asked by young people, “How *ought* we, then, to live? We are to flee from por-

nography and other sexual sin. But what can be said *positively* about how God will have us to live in light of the seventh commandment?” We may not, therefore, stop at issuing the negative calling to flee from such sin, but we must also give the positive calling. The Heidelberg Catechism, in its treatment of the seventh commandment, certainly brings out the prohibition of the commandment, but also teaches us its requirement:

“[That we must] live chastely and temperately, whether in holy wedlock or in single life...[s]ince both our body and soul are temples of the Holy Ghost, He commands us to preserve them pure and holy...” (Q&As 108-109).

We will notice, this time, what God requires of us in the *single* life. Probably most of the young people reading this, as well as some of the young adults, are single. Although this article applies to those who are older and unmarried, it certainly applies to you who are younger, even to those who are dating and not yet married.

Allow me to suggest three categories, all starting with “C,” that help us understand our life and calling in the single state as related to the seventh commandment.

Christ

What is most important in the unmarried state is to understand that you *are* in a relationship. Carefully read Ephesians 5:22ff. Marriage is a picture of the relationship of Christ and the church. We are intimately united to Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is the Head of the church, and the church is His body. This spiritual reality applies to all of God’s people—also those who are single. We have everything, absolutely everything, in Him. *This* relationship is everything! *This* relationship is all-satisfying.

Knowing this relationship, there is contentment even when the Lord has not given a husband or a wife to live with in the intimacy of marriage. Knowing the present bliss of Christ and the blessings in Him, gladly do we behave chastely in dating before marriage. Knowing the delight of this relationship with our Lord, there is a joy we have that is so much deeper than the “happiness” offered in electronic immorality. Knowing the everlasting treasures found in our loving Savior and Head, Jesus Christ, the fleeting promises of sexual pleasure outside the marriage bed offered by the world no longer have their hold.

Are we under the chief means of grace at church, where Christ is preached in all His glory and beauty? Are we in the Word day after day, studying and meditating upon that relationship of Christ and His church which fills the pages of Scripture? This is what you need, young people, in your unmarried life. Stand in wonder, day after day, as you gaze by faith upon the lovely face of your Savior.

Chastity

God calls single young people and young adults to a life of *chastity*. This is one idea, among others, included in the biblical word “pure.” Purity is one of the characteristics of the citizens of the kingdom, as Jesus says in Matthew 5:8: “Blessed are the pure in heart:

for they shall see God.” The citizens of the kingdom are those for whom Jesus has died. The citizens of the kingdom are those who have been regenerated by the Spirit of Jesus Christ—Jesus Christ, who is *the* pure in heart. These citizens are sanctified by the Spirit of Christ—separating them from sin and defilement and consecrating them to God. To be sure, we kingdom citizens have only a small beginning of obedience. All our lifetime we learn more and more to know our sinful nature, and thus become the more earnest in seeking the remission of sin and righteousness in Christ (Heidelberg Catechism, A. 115). What characterizes the citizen of the kingdom is a genuine devotion to the thrice-holy God, a life of thankful service to God.

Purity can, of course, refer to many areas of life, but we are interested in *sexual* purity. Citizens of the kingdom, the pure in heart, abhor the filth of sexual sin. Pornography and related sexual sins are like sewage. Beneath the streets of New York is an extensive sewer system, carrying polluted water. This sickly green water is thick, frothy, and slimy. The very sight and smell of this underground flow is repulsive and revolting. The kingdom citizen seeks, by God’s grace, to be unpolluted in a world of so much sexual sewage. Sexual purity is a life of thankful service to God when we are on our phone, reading a book, thinking thoughts, and when we are all alone at home. Earlier I referred to the spiritual reality of Christ and the church. In this relationship, the church *submits* to Christ, her Head. The church submits to Christ’s will also regarding sexual matters, and this manifests itself in a life of chastity, even though such a life includes difficulties and sacrifice. In short, a life of sexual purity is this: “glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God’s” (I Cor. 6:20).

Preparation for marriage is also a part of this chaste single life. Certainly, marriage is not for all—the single life is *good* (I Cor. 7:8), and we must remember this and be sensitive to this. However, not all have the gift of sexual self-control, and such ought to marry; it is better to marry than to burn in lust (I Cor. 7:9). The citizen of the kingdom who understands this will, with a Spirit-worked desire for sexual purity, seek out a spiritually like-minded man or woman to date, chastely prepare for marriage in that period of dating, and then marry. Here is a paragraph from our biblically-based Marriage Form:

For, to avoid fornication, let every man have his own wife, and every woman her own husband (I Cor. 7:2); insomuch that all who are come to their years and have not the gift of continence are bound by the command of God to enter into the marriage state, with knowledge and consent of parents (or guardians) and friends; so

that the temple of God, which is our body, may not be defiled; for, whosoever defileth the temple of God, him shall God destroy (I Cor. 3:17).

Care

But we can say more about our life and calling as those who are unmarried. These single years are an opportunity to care for the things of the Lord. Consider what I Corinthians 7:32, 34 say: “But I would have you without carefulness. He that is unmarried careth for the things that belong to the Lord, how he may please the Lord:...[T]he unmarried woman careth for the things of the Lord, that she may be holy both in body and in spirit.” This word “careth” is the same word the Bible uses in other places in the sense of anxiety—a mind that is drawn in different directions and filled with a flurry of thoughts. In the I Corinthians 7 passage, this care is not anxiety, but rather describes the single person who is *consumed* with the things of the Lord. This caring for the things of the Lord is a life of holiness: separation from sin (including sexual impurity) and consecration to the Lord (including the area of sexual purity). As the context in I Corinthians 7 makes plain, the unmarried can serve the Lord *more fully* than the married, for the married must attend to the responsibilities of their marriage, their home, and their day-to-day earthly existence (I Cor. 7:33, 34).

What does this care for the things of the Lord look like? Although consistent devotional life should mark

all the years of your life, *now* you have the opportunity to give yourself to that in a uniquely full and rich way! When was the last time you visited with and encouraged those elderly saints in your church? Are you a well-prepared, regular, and lively attendee at your church Bible society? What about that volunteer work at the local Christian school, or that committee work at church? Young ladies, have you ever considered lending a hand to that busy mother in your church, or just offering a word of encouragement? Young men, have you ever given thought to walking alongside and helping that man in your congregation who is struggling in his marriage?

There is a warning to be issued. What is often true of saints who fall into sexual sin is that they had been slothfully neglecting their callings. Idleness is Satan’s workshop. When David committed adultery with Bathsheba, he had stayed back to enjoy leisure in Jerusalem when he should have been on the battlefield. In contrast to this, remember Joseph, who was *busy* serving the Lord in Potiphar’s house, not giving heed to the advances of Potiphar’s wicked wife. God’s will for us as unmarried Christians is busyness in serving Him.

Dear single reader, your life right now ought to be one of full, rich service to the Lord Jesus Christ! This is your willing and thankful service to your Master, the One to whom you belong.

In the next article, Lord willing, we will consider to what we are called, positively, in the life of *marriage*.