

## Session 2: CONTENTMENT IN BEING SINGLE

- I. The issue of loneliness today
  - a. It is an issue with us today.
  - b. Loneliness as a problem in general
    - i. Proof: From a BBC article: *“Across all ages one in 10 people in the UK often feel lonely, the Mental Health Foundation has found, a state which can impact upon one's physical health. The charity highlights the decline of community and a growing focus on work.”*<sup>1</sup>
  - c. Loneliness is a problem with the old
    - i. Proof: From a BBC article: *“The changing nature of the family, with fewer children who themselves often move away, has increased the prospect of elderly isolation. This has also become more likely as a result of longer life expectancies, the report noted. But neighbourhoods have also changed, with the local services such as post offices that tended to form the heart of old communities on the decline.”*<sup>2</sup>
  - d. Loneliness is a problem across gender lines
    - i. Proof: Not just the perception of men's problem, it's also true for women: *“The report also found gender differences, with more women than men reporting loneliness, and more likely to feel depressed as a result. It highlighted the fact that the proportion of people living alone, both male and female, had doubled between 1972 and 2008.”*<sup>3</sup>
  - e. Loneliness is perhaps even more of a problem with the young
    - i. Proof: *“The Lonely Society report described the generational differences uncovered in its survey as “striking”. Nearly 60% of those aged between 18 to 34 questioned spoke of feeling lonely often or sometimes, compared to 35% of those aged over 55.”*<sup>4</sup>
  - f. An Internet world has also fueled problems
    - i. Proof: From a BBC article: *“New technology meanwhile may be both a boon and a burden, the report suggested... But there are also concerns that technology is being used as a replacement for genuine human interaction. Nearly a third of young people questioned for the report said they spent too much time communicating with friends and families online when they should see them in person. Whether this has any genuine biological impact is unclear, but it has been suggested that physical presence is needed for the hormone oxytocin to be released - believed to be the chemical process underpinning the relationship between social contact and healthy hearts. Sarah Brennan, head of the charity YoungMinds, said: “The young people we work with tell us that talking to hundreds of people on social networks is not like having a real*

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<sup>1</sup> Clare Murphy, “Young More Lonely than the Old,” BBC News, May 25, 2010. From <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/health/8701763.stm>.

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*relationship and when they are using these sites they are often alone in their bedrooms. "Loneliness is a big problem which we need to start to tackle. In the last few years our communities have broken down and become atomised. We need to foster these relationships again and invest in our young people's wellbeing so that they have somewhere to go or to turn to when they are feeling lonely."*<sup>5</sup>

- g. **Conclusion:** While realizing the limitation of surveys and psychological studies, and acknowledging that this study is based on a British population, yet given the parallel to American society it is striking and shows the need to address the issue of loneliness and being content in singleness.

II. Principle 1: Finding ultimate joy in the LORD

a. **Proof:**

- i. God is a believer's exceeding joy: *"Then I will go to the altar of God, to God my exceeding joy; And upon the lyre I shall praise You, O God, my God."* (Psalm 43:4)
- ii. The joy of the LORD is what God does
  1. As part of the fruit of the Spirit: *"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness"* (Galatians 5:22)
- iii. It's a command to find joy in the LORD:
  1. **Note:** There is a sense where finding joy in the LORD is also a human responsibility.
  2. *"Be glad in the LORD and rejoice, you righteous ones; And shout for joy, all you who are upright in heart."* (Psalm 32:11)
    - a. Context is a psalm that talks about the blessing of being forgiven!
    - b. In other words, the joy experience in the Lord is in the context of being forgiven one's sin.
  3. *"Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice!"* (Philippians 4:4)
    - a. This was stated right after **verse 3**, which talks about those who struggle in the cause of the Gospel.
    - b. Clearly, in the midst of struggle, a believer is commanded to find joy in the LORD!

- b. **Picture:** It is a thing that I know Walter (Andrew's friend) lives out.

c. **Practice:** How do we get joy in the LORD?

- i. Being in His presence: *"You will make known to me the path of life; In Your presence is fullness of joy; In Your right hand there are pleasures forever."* (Psalm 16:11)
- ii. Being in His Word: *"Your words were found and I ate them, and Your words became for me a joy and the delight of my heart; For I have been called by Your name, O LORD God of hosts."* (Jeremiah 15:16)
- iii. If you lovingly obey His commandments: *"If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love; just as I have kept My Father's*

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*commandments and abide in His love. <sup>11</sup>"These things I have spoken to you so that My joy may be in you, and that your joy may be made full."*  
(John 15:10-11)

### III. Principle 2: Pursue Holiness

#### a. Explanation:

- i. This is building upon John 15:10-11 earlier above. Obedience to Christ has been revealed to be so *"that your joy may be made full."*
- ii. God is sovereign over your state of being single, and while His will is multi-faceted, it is true that in some sense, He wants for you to be sanctified in your singleness.

#### b. Proof:

- i. He works all things according to His purpose: *"And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose"* (Romans 8:28)
  1. Note that all things are caused by God *"to work together for good"*
  2. This good is defined *"according to His purpose"*
- ii. His purpose follows the counsel of His will: *"also we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to His purpose who works all things after the counsel of His will,"* (Ephesians 1:11)
- iii. His will include your sanctification: *"For this is the will of god, your sanctification..."* (1 Thessalonians 4:3)

#### c. Picture: (A classmate in Seminary, growing in being more Christ-like in being single and wanting to go to missions to Afghanistan; God used the season of singleness to grow Him deeply)

#### d. Practice: Put off self, put on Christ likeness

- i. Ask the question, "Do I truly believe God's promise that pursuing holiness leads to full joy?"
- ii. Ask the question: "What is God teaching me right now in my life?"
- iii. Actively read, study, meditate on the Scriptures, ask others, plan and work on those areas one need to be sanctified in.

### IV. Principle 3: Fellowship with the Body of Christ

#### a. Explanation: Even during singleness, God never intended believers to be alone. Actively fellowshiping with the body of Christ is important for singles.

#### b. Proof:

- i. The church is not just one member, but many: *"For the body is not one member, but many."* (1 Corinthians 12:14)
- ii. Singles are important to the church
  1. Singles often seem as weaker or less honorable members, but this means the need for conscious honor for the less "honorable" members.
  2. This is the principle taught by Paul: *"On the contrary, it is much truer that the members of the body which seem to be weaker are necessary; <sup>23</sup>and those members of the body which we deem less honorable, on these we bestow more abundant honor, and our less presentable members become much more presentable, <sup>24</sup>whereas our more presentable members have no need of it. But God has so*

*composed the body, giving more abundant honor to that member which lacked, <sup>25</sup>so that there may be no division in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another. <sup>26</sup>And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it.” (1 Corinthians 12:22-26)*

- iii. You are part of the family (household) of God: *“So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God's household...” (Ephesians 2:19)*
- c. Picture: (The example of Walter and his decision of what would be a good girlfriend)
- d. Practice:
  - i. For singles
    1. If you are a member of the body of Christ, live up truly to being a member of the church, rather than date it
    2. If you are part of God's family, treat those at church like your family members: *“Do not sharply rebuke an older man, but rather appeal to him as a father, to the younger men as brothers, <sup>2</sup>the older women as mothers, and the younger women as sisters, in all purity.” (1<sup>st</sup> Timothy 5:1-2)*
    3. Make sure you make your primary friends in the church, rather than be driven to make friends with the world, for *“do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility towards God? Therefore, whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.” (James 4:4)*
    4. Practice these steps on being content in singleness in the context of the church
      - a. Keep yourself accountable to others
      - b. Strive towards Godliness with other singles
      - c. Share with others God's faithfulness in your singleness and encourage others to being godly contentment in singleness
  - ii. For couples:
    1. See singles as important in the church, and not just a group who are means to an end.
    2. Incorporate singles in your ministry and fellowship with them as well!
    3. Realize how important that for some, church is all that some people have in terms of a community and family; this should mean more love and compassion on your part.
    4. Share with them the materials here on being content.