

● Finding a spouse

Look at the following marriages in the Bible and decide if they are arranged marriages or love marriages. Circle A or L.

Ref	Person		
Gen 21:21	_____	A	L
Gen 24:1-67	_____	A	L
Gen 26:34-35	_____	A	L
Gen 29:15-18	_____	A	L
Judg 14:1-11	_____	A	L



What is your opinion of these ways of meeting your spouse? Do you think God can use them both? What is your experience? What do you think of organisations which introduce singles to each other?



Man meets woman

There are two main systems in the world for finding a suitable husband or wife.

• Arranged marriage

Your spouse is found by your parents. You may meet the person briefly before you get married but you probably do not know them.

Advantages — You will not be left unmarried. Good parents will be very careful in choosing a suitable spouse and will usually go ahead only with your agreement. Your parents will be very committed to and supportive of your marriage since they have arranged it. You may make more effort to develop love for your spouse.

Disadvantages — You do not know the person you are getting married to and you may not like them. There is no way of testing the relationship.

• Love marriage

You meet someone and are attracted. You spend time with them and decide you love them and wish to marry them. You consult or inform your parents.

Advantages — You are able to test the friendship to see if you get on well together. You know the person you are getting married to.

Disadvantages — You may never meet anyone suitable and so remain single. There is a danger that infatuation and sexual attraction are mistaken for love and that these weaken in marriage. Your parents may not be supportive of the marriage.

Are you single? (or remember when you were single)

What do/did you find most difficult?

What do/did you enjoy most?

single

extra thought and discussion

• Problems with being single

Being single for a long time can make you independent, selfish, stubborn and fixed in your way of life. It is good to have people with whom you can discuss your life decisions and whom you allow to advise you. Talk with your friends, your parents, your church leaders. You will also remain more marriageable!

• Sex and the single person

The expectation for Christian singles is that they will refrain from sexual relations with others. Sex outside marriage is not an option for a follower of Jesus.

This may be a very different viewpoint from that of the society you live in but it is God's standard and he will give you the ability to live a pure life. See Unit 13 on other aspects of sex.

• Friendships

Strong one-to-one friendships can be helpful but they can become very intense. It is helpful to have several close friends with whom you can enjoy spending time. Your friends also need to know your "agenda" in the friendship otherwise their expectations may be different! Group friendships are safer and very enjoyable for single people.

• Single parents

Single parents of small children often have little adult conversation and can feel lonely, isolated and very hard worked. It is a challenge for churches to support people in this situation.

single

● Definitions

* Genesis 2:18

In Bible times the normal expectation was for men and women to be married. However in any society there are adults who are not married and are single — this may or may not be out of choice.

● It is good to be single

* 1 Corinthians 1:1, 7:8, 7:25-35

Who is the single person writing this letter? _____

What can married people expect (v 28)? _____

What are married people concerned about? _____

What can single people devote themselves to? _____

A single person may have more freedom, time, flexibility and money to serve God.

Biblical marital status

- **Pre-marriage singles** — Young adults living in their parents' home. They do not have sexual relations and are expected to be virgins (Deut 22:13-21).
- **Betrothed, engaged or pledged to be married** — Single adults living with parents but their marriage partner has been chosen. They do not have sexual relations with their betrothed. The betrothal contract was almost as strong as marriage and was rarely reversed (Matt 1:18-25).
- **Married** — Men and women in a covenant relationship who have sexual relations (see Unit 14).
- **Post-married singles** — Adults who are widowed or divorced. Widows often went back to their parental families (Ruth 1:8-9).
- **Remarried** — Often widows married brothers or other close relatives of their husbands (Ruth 3:1-4).



Write down some ways that a single person can effectively serve God in your church or elsewhere.

● **Single and content - do not intend to marry**

* 1 Corinthians 7:1, 7:7, 7:37 * Matthew 19:10-12

Why do some people renounce marriage? _____

Some people are called to an unmarried, celibate state. Paul, Jeremiah (*Jeremiah 16:1-2*) and Jesus are examples of people who were called to be single because of their particular task for God. Paul was able to undertake very dangerous journeys and risk his life in the cause of the gospel because he did not have family responsibilities (*Luke 14:20, 18:29-30*). Those called to celibacy can plan long term service for God.

* Mark 10:29-30 * 1 Corinthians 9:5 * 1 Timothy 4:1-4

Which apostle *was* married? _____

Permanent singleness is a call for some people but not for everybody.

● **Single and content - but expect to marry**

* 1 Corinthians 7:17-28

For many, singleness is a temporary state and their expectation is to marry at some time in the future. Those who are content will be able to devote themselves to God's service and use their freedom to full advantage. They may feel able to commit themselves to short term service for God.



* Acts 21:9

What did these unmarried girls do? _____

● **Single and frustrated**

Some single people feel very frustrated at being single and desire the intimate friendship afforded by marriage.

* 1 Corinthians 7:1-2, 7:8-9, 7:36-38 * 1 Timothy 5:11-15

What should you do if you are frustrated? _____



If you are single - which of the above categories best fits you? _____

What short term opportunities for service for God are you aware of for single people? What is your experience of these? _____

● **Loneliness**

God made us to enjoy company and friendship. This is ideally fulfilled in marriage (*Genesis 2:18-24*) and it is only natural that single people will feel lonely from time to time. God has provided many ways to support single people.

● **Friends**

Friends of all ages, married, single and both genders can be a great encouragement (see Unit 11). Groups of people can have great fun together and this is a good setting for developing friendships, caring and praying for each other.



● **Family** * Psalm 68:5-6

What does God do with lonely people? _____

As well as natural families, the whole family of God is able to provide help and support for single people.



How well do you provide friendship and a family backup for single people in your church or whom you know from work or other areas of life? Think about young singles, single parents, divorced, widowed etc.

Is there more you could do to help? _____

● **Devotion to God's work** * Luke 2:36-37

What did this single person devote herself to? _____

Devotion to the work of God can take your attention away from yourself and any loneliness.

● **God's presence and love**

* Psalm 139:7-10 * Isaiah 41:10 * Matthew 28:20 * John 14:18

The Bible is packed with promises of the presence of God. This is the best and most permanent antidote to loneliness! He is always with you!

* Deut 10:18 * Psalm 42:8 * John 13:1 * Rev 19:6-8, 21:1-2

Even though we may not experience intimate human love, we can learn to love our Father and Jesus in an intimate way. We may not marry in this life but all believers are promised to be married in eternity.

Who is the bride? _____ Who is the groom? _____