

# PERSPECTIVE

SEPTEMBER 2024

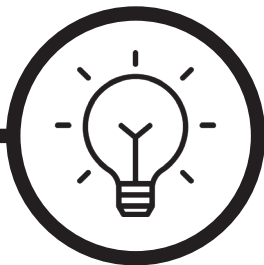
# SINGLES AT WORK



# CONTENTS



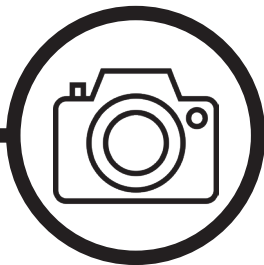
ARTICLE ..... 1  
*Singles at Work*  
Caroline McGill



BOOK HIGHLIGHT ..... 5  
*Just Do Something*  
Written by Kevin DeYoung  
Recommended by Caleb Oliver



BIBLE READING PLAN ..... 6  
*Take Up & Read*  
September



NEW MEMBERS ..... 7  
*Hunter & Hannah Copp, Yonu Falowo,*  
*Nathan Hales, Andrew Martinez,*  
*Kim Priolo, Richard & Kathy Sutter*

## Singles at Work

I recently had the joy of hosting my young niece and nephew overnight. While we enjoyed a fun evening together, I had high hopes of getting some work done on several ministry projects that evening after they went to bed. I also needed to check in on some friends I knew were going through difficult situations. Even though my niece and nephew were put to bed promptly at 8:30, they got out of bed eight times that evening. Needless to say, I didn't accomplish any of my to-do list. The following morning, instead of having my normal, lengthy quiet time, I woke up to two cute little faces who wanted attention and breakfast. While I cherish spending time with my niece and nephew, the reality is that my attention was divided.

In a small way, this experience helped me better understand what the Apostle Paul was talking about when he wrote of the gift of singleness (1 Cor. 7:7–8, 25–35). Don't get me wrong. Children and marriage are good gifts. But the Bible says singleness is a good gift, too. The gift of singleness is not a spiritual gift some singles have, while others don't. Just as anyone currently married has the gift of marriage, anyone currently single has the gift of singleness (1 Cor. 7:7). This gift comes with a call for undivided devotion to the Lord (1 Cor. 7:35). While God calls every Christian to work for him, there are unique ways in which singles can live and work for his glory. For the single Christian, usually, this means the time spent not attending to a spouse or children can be used more intentionally to work for the Lord. This is a good gift that God has given both to his church and the single Christian.

### A BIBLICAL VIEW OF SINGLENES

We need a biblical understanding of singleness to help us think rightly about work for the single Christian. The most comprehensive view of biblical singleness is found in 1 Corinthians 7, where Paul, a single himself, makes three observations about singleness.

*First, Paul describes singleness as a good gift.* “I wish that all were as I myself am. But each has his own gift from God, one of one kind and one of another. To the unmarried and the widows I say that it is good for them to remain single, as I am” (1 Cor. 7:7–8). Sadly, singleness is viewed by some, even those within the church, as something to be looked down on. They wrongly think, “What could be good about being single?” Hallmark, Hollywood, dating apps, and well-meaning family and friends tell singles that they need a significant other for their lives to have joy, meaning, and purpose. However, this is not what the Bible teaches about singleness at all! It's not like the single

Christian got ugly argyle socks for Christmas while their married sibling got a Ferrari. Singleness is a good gift from the Lord, not a consolation prize.

This gift is not merely for the single Christian but for the entire church. Scripture tells us “[g]ifts . . . are about building up the church rather than feeling a sense of individual, personal fulfillment. [They are] about serving others and not about feeling a special sense of peace.”<sup>i</sup> So whether one has the gift of marriage or the gift of singleness, these gifts are not about our own fulfillment but glorifying God.

*Second, Paul recognizes singleness can be hard.* For many, though not all, singleness can be difficult and come with longings for marriage, companionship, and intimacy (1 Cor. 7:9). Fleeing from sin amid such desires can be challenging. Paul also says that just as singleness is good, so is marriage, and it is good for singles to desire and pursue marriage. For those who long for marriage and children that the Lord has not given, singleness can come with feelings of loneliness, fear, and disappointment. While he would commend the gift of singleness, Paul does not avoid the reality that singleness can come with pain and hardship.

*Third, Paul declares that single Christians are to have “undivided devotion to the Lord”* (1 Cor. 7:35). The single is to be “anxious about the things of the Lord,” thinking about “how to please the Lord,” and concerned with “how to be holy in body and spirit” (1 Cor 7:32–34). One author explains, “Faithful singleness demands that we ask how we can offer our time, resources, and relational capacity and selves to his service.”<sup>ii</sup>

In God's economy, singleness comes with great freedom. This freedom is not about making much of oneself but about making much of the Lord. The single Christian is free to more fully devote their attention to the Lord than the married Christian. While Paul commends and upholds marriage (Eph. 5:31), it is not easy. He recognizes it comes with certain “worldly troubles” (1 Cor. 7:28).

Sadly, many singles do not consider their singleness in light of 1 Corinthians 7. This can have drastically negative effects on their lives and work. One of the many temptations of singleness is the idolization of self. Singles can wrongly believe they need a significant other to find their own joy and purpose in life. They do everything within their power to exit their current stage of life. Obsession with dating or improving their physical appearance may consume their thoughts and time, limiting their work for the Lord. Others completely

reject this idea of needing someone else, instead seeking identity in a career or seeing their job as a means to an end for excessive experiences, luxuries, media, pleasure, and leisure. At the bottom of all these misconceptions are pride and selfishness, which ultimately leave us empty.

Both single and married Christians can fall into the trap of thinking that life is really about their own happiness. However, self-focus can be a particularly strong temptation for the single. Without a spouse or children to divide one's attention, the single who is not focused on the things of the Lord can easily drift into selfishness. But the solution is not marriage or noble self-reliance. The solution is repentance and a heart transformed by the gospel of Christ.

## SINGLES AT WORK

So, how should the single Christian think about work? Thankfully, it is not by hiding away in a monastery. All Christians are called to work "unto the Lord" wherever God has placed them (Col. 3:23). However, there is a unique way in which the Bible speaks to singles as they think about their work, whether that be in their nine-to-five vocation or the work they do outside of a formal career. Using Paul's three observations in 1 Corinthians 7, I would like to offer some practical encouragement, first to the single and then to the entire church.

### Practical Encouragement for Singles

*First, see your singleness as a good gift for the church and God's kingdom.*

How you perceive your singleness will have drastic implications on how you think about your life and work. In the parable of the talents (Matt. 25:14–30), Jesus describes three servants who are given varied amounts of talents while their master is away. Maybe you look at your singleness, and you only perceive lack. You think, "If only I had a spouse and children, then I could *really* serve the Lord." Or perhaps you hoard your singleness, thinking, "I will use my freedom to make myself happy." But, as we've already seen, your singleness is a gift God has given you to use for him. When he returns, will you be found among those who faithfully stewarded the gifts God gave them? By God's grace, may we not be like the "wicked and slothful" servant who buried what he had been given and was to be "cast into the outer darkness" (Matt. 25:26, 30). When you begin to recognize that your singleness is not all about you, it motivates you to offer what you have been given back to the Lord.

*Second, turn to the Lord and seek godly wisdom.*

Singleness is good. Yet, for many, singleness is hard. Planning for the future can be daunting, especially when it comes to making decisions on your own. You may have given up career aspirations or education with the hope of having a family, only to have those dreams not come to fruition. In the face of dashed hopes and unknown futures, the single Christian can turn to the Lord in lament and trust his sovereign goodness (Ps. 25:16; 62:8; 113:9; 147:3).

On the other hand, making life or career decisions can feel easier for some singles. Without a spouse or kids tying you down, you genuinely have more freedom. How do you steward this freedom well? Rather than making career decisions in isolation, seek wisdom from godly elders and friends. Rather than telling people what you're going to do, humbly ask them to help you consider what is wise, and then really listen. God has given us shepherds to care for our souls so that we may be equipped "for the work of ministry" and "for building up the body of Christ" (Eph. 4:11–12). Lean into this good gift. Don't make decisions regarding your work in isolation.

*Third, steward your work and free time for the glory of the Lord.*

If the single Christian's life is to be marked by undivided devotion to the Lord, it should have a massive impact on our work and free time. But how do we steward these in an undivided way?

*Steward your career to work for the glory of the Lord.* When you think about work, you most likely think about your formal job or career. All Christians are called to steward their work well. Consider the ways your singleness allows you to uniquely glorify the Lord in your career:

- ✦ In a world obsessed with self, ask, "How can my singleness be a testament to Christ's sufficiency and goodness as I share my life with my co-workers?"
- ✦ You may have opportunities to make significant career moves more easily than your married friends. As you consider, ask, "Will this move help me grow in Christlikeness or hinder it?"
- ✦ If your job offers flexibility, consider, "How can I use this flexibility to fold into the church, pursue holiness, and serve others well?"
- ✦ If you have more relational capacity to spend time with others, consider how you can build relationships and share the gospel with your coworkers and clients.



- Are you considering a new job or reflecting on your current career? Ask yourself, "Does this job help me to work for God's kingdom, or am I pursuing it to build my own?"
- Maybe not having a spouse and children means your job provides you with more financial resources than you need. Consider how you can give generously to support gospel ministry.
- If singleness allows you to consider vocational ministry more easily, pray and ask, "Lord, would you have me pursue full-time ministry or missions?"

*Steward your free time to work for the glory of the Lord.* Not all work is in your nine-to-five. *Time and flexibility* are likely two of the greatest commodities you have as a single. The Lord calls you to steward these gifts for him rather than for yourself. I often think that one of the greatest gifts of singleness is the ability to say "yes" and show up more often. As a single, you may be able to drop everything at the last minute to serve a hurting friend, help a family in need of a sitter, stop for a long gospel conversation, meet up with a new member for coffee, or take a meal to someone who is sick. Or perhaps your time and flexibility allow you to commit to a larger ministry project, go on a mission trip, or regularly serve with the example of steadfast faithfulness. As you seek to use your singleness to be "holy in body and spirit" (1 Cor 7:34), use your time to grow in your relationship with and knowledge of God. Then, use the gifts God has given you and pour them out on others.

Lastly, as you consider your free time, use it to fold into the life of the church. If singleness is a gift for God's church, wouldn't it make sense for singles to be regularly present among the body? Have you ever thought about the fact that you are a gift to the body? As Sam Allberry put it, "If marriage shows the shape of the gospel, singleness shows its sufficiency."<sup>iii</sup> Your faithful example of serving and following the Lord helps other believers understand the sufficiency of our loving Savior. Do you make gathering with the church a priority? Perhaps your singleness allows you to be present among believers more than the average member. Why not lean in even more? Build your life around the church and serve the body to build it up (1 Cor 12:14–26).

### Practical Encouragement for the Church

If you aren't single and you've made it this far, thank you for reading! God calls the body of Christ to love singles in their midst (Ps. 68:6). As you interact with and encourage singles around you, I hope to encourage you as well.

*First, recognize the goodness of singleness.*

Your words, thoughts, and prayers about singleness and marriage significantly impact the hearts of singles in the church and how they steward their singleness. Do you believe singleness really is a good gift from God for his church and not his second best? If so, speak the truth to singles in a way that builds them up. We all need to recognize God's goodness in what he has given us (Ps. 34:10b). As you see singles at Mount Vernon who work and serve others to the glory of God, praise God for this gift he has given to them and the church. Thank God for singles in our midst. Don't just pray for contentment or escape for singles. Pray that their hearts and attention would be focused on God in the good work that he has given them to do today.

*Second, be willing to care for singles when singleness is hard.*

Navigating life and work alone can be difficult. Consider inviting singles into your life. Just as singles are a gift to the body, so are you! Married couples and families, what might it look like for you to open up your homes and lives to singles in the church? Invite them for a meal. Fold them into family activities when you can. Seek them out when the church gathers. As you spend time with singles, be a listening ear, and when helpful, offer godly advice. Ask singles about their day and their work. Usually, going home alone means that no one asks. Also, feel free to ask singles what is hard about life and work. Pray for them, and when appropriate, lament with them.

*Third, encourage singles to work unto the Lord.*

When thinking about encouraging singles in their work, remember they aren't all the same. All have different gifts, capabilities, and levels of maturity. Do you see a single pursuing holiness and striving to work and serve others well? Tell them! Encourage them. Remind them regularly to press on in good faith. Challenge them to think more deeply about how to use their singleness for the Lord. Remember that singleness does not equal immaturity any more than marriage equals maturity. Ask them to serve, teach, disciple, lead, and work in big and small ways. They likely want to say yes. Do you see a single who seems to be struggling or making poor decisions about their time and work? Befriend them, point them to Scripture, encourage them to fold into the church, and walk alongside them. Whether married or single, we all need to exhort and encourage one another "to walk in a manner worthy of God" (1 Thess. 2:12).

## THE EXAMPLE OF OUR SAVIOR

God has not called the single Christian to walk a path he did not walk himself. Jesus Christ lived the most complete life anyone has ever lived as a single. Though he was tempted, he walked in perfect holiness. Though he was the King of kings, he embraced the life of a servant. And though he was rejected, he selflessly laid down his life.

Single Christian, as you seek to think about what it looks like to work for the Lord, look to the example of Jesus. He lived to glorify the Father and gave his life for the church. Will you do the same? Whether singleness is for a season or a lifetime, he has given you good work to do in it. Let his righteousness, sacrificial love, and enabling grace push you to use the good gifts he has given you to work for his kingdom.

— Caroline McGill

## RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

- ✦ Allberry, Sam. *7 Myths About Singleness*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2019.
- ✦ Elliot, Elisabeth. *The Path of Loneliness*. Grand Rapids, MI: Revell, 2001.
- ✦ Reju, Deepak. *She's Got the Wrong Guy: Why Smart Women Settle*. Greensboro, NC: New Growth Press, 2017.
- ✦ Swett, Jenilyn. *Singleness: Living Faithfully*. Philipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2021.

<sup>i</sup> Sam Allberry, *7 Myths About Singleness* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2019), 40.

<sup>ii</sup> Jenilyn Swett, *Singleness: Living Faithfully* (Philipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2021), 12.

<sup>iii</sup> Allberry, *7 Myths About Singleness*, 120.

## Just Do Something

*A Liberating Approach to Finding God's Will*

Written by Kevin DeYoung

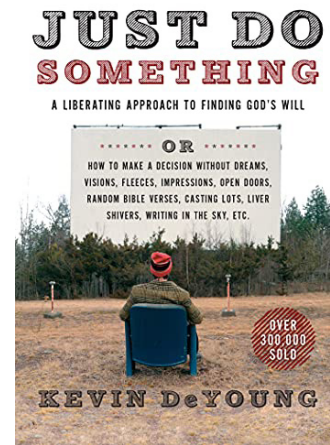
Upon our salvation, the Holy Spirit gives us a desire to please God. Ideally, this means we obey God's commands outlined in Scripture and trust in his perfect and absolute sovereignty. But what does this mean for making everyday and important life decisions according to that will? Do we have to wonder and fret that we are doing something wrong or that the Lord disapproves of our decision? In *Just Do Something: A Liberating Approach to Finding God's Will*, Kevin DeYoung suggests that, for the most part, we can know God's will for our lives and make choices without figuring out the one right choice. Through this short book, he honestly and sometimes hilariously shows us how waiting for God's direction apart from what we find in his Word is not biblical. Like Gideon of old, we want God to show us the way, but God already has through his Word. As long as we avoid sinful behavior and seek wisdom in the means of grace God has given us, we can be confident that we are doing what God wants and just do something.

Reading this book taught me that God is clear in his perfect will for our lives and that waiting for God's direction in every minute detail of our lives is ultimately fruitless. In the book, DeYoung references a fake news article on the Christian humor site Babylon Bee, where a man spent 70 years waiting for God to give him direction in life and died at 91 still waiting. Following God's known will and trusting in his absolute sovereignty is wise; waiting for God's direction on every detail of our lives only leads to more waiting.

DeYoung uses Scripture to back up his argument throughout the book. In particular, he cites the story of Esther coming into the Persian King Xerxes' court unannounced at the risk of her own life (Esther 4). This decision had tremendous consequences, yet Esther trusted God and made it. As a result of this brave action, Esther saved her people from certain doom.

This book is meant to give clarity to those who want to please God but often struggle and worry over whether their choice is God's choice. DeYoung addresses young adults directly regarding job choices, marriage proposals, etc. By trusting that God is not sneaky and mysterious, young Christians can stop waiting and move forward with their life choices. However, some choices need more thought, prayer, and counsel than others. In summary, when we believe God's will is best for our lives and cannot be thwarted, we can move forward by trusting God.

— Recommended by Caleb Oliver



### Excerpts from the Book

## 1

Because we have confidence in God's will of decree, we can radically commit ourselves to his will of desire, without fretting over a hidden will of direction.

– "Directionally Challenged" p. 39

## 2

God's way is not to show us what tomorrow looks like or even to tell us what decisions we should make tomorrow. That's not his way because that's not the way of faith. God's way is to tell us that he knows tomorrow, He cares for us, and therefore, we should not worry.

– "A Better Way" p. 55

## 3

Don't confuse impressions, hunches, and subjective feelings with certain words from the Lord. If a thought or impulse pops into your head, even if it happens while reading Scripture, don't assume it is a voice from heaven.

– "Tools of the Trade" p. 84

# SEPTEMBER

These Scripture readings have been selected to help you prepare for the Sunday morning message. Take Up & Read!

<b>September 1</b>	<b>Genesis 2:15</b>	September 16	Romans 12:1–9–13
September 2	Psalms 103	September 17	Romans 9:14–33
September 3	Psalms 104	September 18	Romans 10:1–13
September 4	Psalms 100	September 19	Romans 10:14–21
September 5	Psalms 101	September 20	Amos 5
September 6	Mark 12:1–12	September 21	Romans 11:1–24
September 7	Psalms 102	<b>September 22</b>	<b>Romans 12:9–13</b>
<b>September 8</b>	<b>Psalms 103</b>	September 23	Romans 12:14–21
September 9	Genesis 2:2	September 24	Romans 11:25–36
September 10	Hebrews 3:7–4:11	September 25	Romans 12
September 11	Matthew 11:25–30	September 26	Romans 13
September 12	Psalms 23	September 27	Proverbs 25
September 13	1 Timothy 3:14–4:5	September 28	Romans 14:1–12
September 14	Genesis 2	<b>September 29</b>	<b>Romans 12:14–21</b>
<b>September 15</b>	<b>Genesis 2:2</b>	September 30	2 Thess. 2:13–15

\*Sermons in bold

# TAKE UP & READ



# NEW MEMBERS

---



**Hunter  
Copp**



**Hannah  
Copp**



**Yonu  
Falowo**



**Nathan  
Hales**



**Andrew  
Martinez**



**Kim  
Priolo**



**Richard  
Sutter**



**Kathy  
Sutter**



MOUNT VERNON  
BAPTIST CHURCH