

The Christian Home, Teacher's Guide

Lesson 10: Every Household Honored: Singleness, Widowhood, and the Hard Home

1 Corinthians 7:7–9, 32–35; 1 Peter 3:1–2

Teaching Aim (Teacher Orientation)

This lesson requires pastoral tenderness above almost any other in the study, because its very subject is the people most likely to feel overlooked by a study on marriage and family: the single, the widowed, and those in difficult or spiritually divided homes. What is doctrinally at stake is the biblical honoring of every station of life. Scripture does not present marriage as the only valid or godly path; it calls singleness 'good,' names it a 'gift,' and points to its unique opportunity for undivided devotion to the Lord. The two most influential figures of the New Testament, Jesus and Paul, were unmarried. The teacher should therefore commend singleness genuinely and positively, not as a regrettable exception but as an honorable calling in which a person can serve the Lord wholeheartedly, while also continuing to honor marriage as the good gift earlier lessons described. Neither station is to be ranked above the other; each is a gift from God.

At the same time, the lesson upholds, in a measured and non-inflammatory way, the New Testament's call to sexual purity and faithfulness in every station. Honoring singleness does not mean loosening the call to chastity; Paul's own counsel about marriage and self-control assumes that sexual intimacy belongs within marriage alone. The teacher should make this point gently and without singling anyone out, as the settled biblical conviction that runs through the whole study, holding together the full honor of the single life and the call to purity within it. To 1 Peter 3:1–2 the lesson returns from Lesson 4, now applied to the spiritually divided home, holding out real hope to the believer married to an unbeliever: the quiet, persevering witness of a godly life can win a spouse that words cannot, though the outcome rests with God.

Above all, this lesson is aimed at the heart, and the teacher must ensure that everyone in the room hears honor and hope rather than pity or exclusion. There will be widows carrying grief, singles weary of waiting, divorced believers wondering where they fit, and people enduring painful homes in silence. The dominant note must be that God honors them, that He is 'Father of the fatherless and protector of widows' who 'sets the lonely in families,' and that the church is precisely the family in which no one stands alone. This anticipates Lesson 12, where the church is unveiled as the household of God. The disciple being formed here is someone who receives their own station as a place to serve and glorify God, and who helps build a church family where every member, in every situation, is fully honored and embraced.

Question 1

Student Question:

Paul writes, “I wish that all were as I myself am [single] ... To the unmarried and the widows I say that it is good for them to remain single, as I am” (1 Corinthians 7:7–8). Remembering that both Jesus and Paul were single, what does it tell us about God’s view of singleness that Scripture calls it ‘good,’ and how does this challenge the assumption that marriage is the only complete or honorable Christian life?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Paul’s words in 1 Corinthians 7 are startling against the backdrop of a culture, ancient and modern, that treats marriage as the default and singleness as a deficiency. ‘I wish that all were as I myself am,’ he writes, and ‘it is good for them to remain single, as I am.’ Paul, single himself, commends the single life as genuinely good, not merely tolerable. The teacher should let this land, because many sincere Christians have absorbed the opposite assumption.

Set this in the larger biblical witness. The Lord Jesus, the perfect and complete human being, never married, and His life lacked nothing. Paul, the great apostle, was single and counted it an advantage for his work. Throughout Scripture, fruitfulness for God is never tied to marital status. If the two most consequential lives in the New Testament were single, then singleness cannot be the second-class or incomplete state our culture assumes.

Be careful to commend singleness without disparaging marriage, which earlier lessons rightly exalted. Paul does both: marriage is good, singleness is good, each is a gift. The point is not to elevate one over the other but to break the false ranking that treats the married as the truly arrived and the single as those still waiting in the lobby of real life. Both stations are honorable; both can fully glorify God.

Apply this pastorally. The room likely holds people who have felt, in church and family, like they do not quite fit, the never-married, the divorced, the widowed. To them this verse is liberating: God calls your station good. You are not a problem to be solved or a project awaiting completion; you are a whole person with a gift and a calling, fully honored by God.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Paul commending singleness as genuinely ‘good,’ not merely tolerable
- Jesus and Paul, both single, as proof singleness is not second-class
- Fruitfulness for God never tied to marital status
- Commending singleness without disparaging marriage; both are gifts
- Liberation for those who have felt they do not fit

Discussion Prompts

- What does it tell us that Scripture calls singleness ‘good’?
- How does the example of Jesus and Paul challenge our assumptions?
- How can we honor singleness without disparaging marriage?

Question 2

Student Question:

It is easy, in a culture and even a church focused on marriage and family, for single believers to view their singleness as a curse, a failure, or a mere waiting room. If you are single, how do you tend to view your season, and what would change if you received it as a genuine gift and calling from God? If you are married, how might you be quietly communicating that singleness is second-best?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This self-application invites honest reflection from both the single and the married. Single believers, surrounded by messages that equate adulthood and fulfillment with marriage, often internalize a view of their singleness as a curse, a failure, or a mere waiting room, life on pause until the real thing begins. The question gently exposes that view and holds out a better one.

Help single students consider what changes when singleness is received as a gift and calling rather than a deficiency. It does not erase the genuine longing many feel for marriage (that longing is real and good and need not be denied), but it refuses to let life be lived in suspension. A gift is meant to be used now. The single believer who embraces the season can pour into ministry, relationships, and devotion to the Lord in ways that bless the whole church, rather than merely marking time.

Turn the question on the married, too, as it does. Married believers can unintentionally communicate that singleness is second-best, through well-meaning matchmaking pressure, pity, exclusion from ‘couples’ events, or thoughtless remarks. Invite the married to consider how they might be sending that message and how they could instead honor and include the single members of the church family. The aim is a community where singleness is genuinely honored, not merely endured.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Singleness viewed as curse, failure, or waiting room
- Receiving singleness as a gift to be used now, not life on pause
- Honoring real longing for marriage without living in suspension
- How the married may communicate that singleness is second-best

Discussion Prompts

- If single, do you view your season as a curse or a gift?
- What would change if you received it as a genuine calling now?
- If married, how might you be signaling that singleness is second-best?

Question 3

Student Question:

Paul points to a real advantage in singleness: “The unmarried man is anxious about the things of the Lord, how to please the Lord ... I say this ... to secure your undivided devotion to the Lord” (1 Corinthians 7:32–35). What is the unique opportunity for devotion and service that singleness can offer, and why does Paul present this as a genuine good rather than a consolation prize?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Paul names a concrete advantage of the single life: undivided devotion to the Lord. The married believer is rightly ‘anxious about worldly things, how to please his wife,’ and ‘his interests are divided.’ This is not a criticism of marriage but an honest observation. A married person carries real and good obligations to a spouse and family that necessarily lay claim to time, energy, and attention. The single person, free of those particular obligations, can offer the Lord an availability that marriage limits.

Stress that Paul presents this as a genuine good, not a consolation prize. He says he speaks ‘to secure your undivided devotion to the Lord,’ as something worth wanting. The single believer can say yes to forms of service, availability, risk, and focus that would be difficult or impossible with a family depending on them. Many of the church’s most fruitful servants, missionaries, ministers, and tireless workers behind the scenes, have leveraged exactly this freedom.

Help students reframe singleness from lack to opportunity. The question is not merely what the single person is missing (a frame the culture loves) but what the single person is uniquely free to give. This does not romanticize singleness or deny its loneliness, but it dignifies it as a station with real kingdom advantages, not just disadvantages to be endured.

The teacher should apply this without implying that single people exist mainly to do the church’s extra work. The point is the dignity and opportunity of the single life before God, an invitation to wholehearted devotion, not a guilt trip to fill volunteer slots.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Undivided devotion to the Lord as the advantage of singleness
- Married ‘divided interests’ as honest observation, not criticism of marriage
- Singleness presented as a genuine good, not a consolation prize
- Reframing singleness from lack to unique opportunity for the kingdom

Discussion Prompts

- What unique opportunity for devotion can singleness offer?
- Why does Paul present this as a real good, not a consolation?
- How does this reframe singleness from what is missing to what can be given?

Question 4

Student Question:

Whether single or married, every believer is called to wholehearted devotion to the Lord. If you are single, are you actually using the freedom of this season for the Lord, or merely waiting for life to 'begin'? If you are married, where have your God-given responsibilities become an excuse for a divided, half-hearted devotion? What would undivided devotion look like for you this week?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This self-application presses the call to undivided devotion onto both the single and the married, refusing to let either off the hook. To the single it says: are you actually using this freedom for the Lord, or merely waiting for life to 'begin' at some future wedding? The freedom of singleness is wasted if it is spent only in waiting; it is a gift meant to be invested now.

To the married it says: have your genuine, God-given responsibilities become an excuse for a divided, half-hearted devotion? Paul acknowledges that marriage divides the interests, but that is not a license for the married to give God their leftovers. The married believer must still seek wholehearted devotion within and through their family obligations, not in spite of God but pleasing Him in the very duties He has given.

Move toward one concrete picture of undivided devotion for each person's situation. For the single, it might mean stepping into a ministry, deepening prayer, or offering availability that a married person could not. For the married, it might mean refusing to let family busyness crowd out devotion to God, or learning to serve God through the family rather than treating the two as rivals. Invite each student to name one way to pursue undivided devotion this week, suited to their station.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Singleness as freedom to invest now, not merely to wait
- Marriage's real duties not an excuse for half-hearted devotion
- Wholehearted devotion pursued within each station, not in spite of it
- One concrete step toward undivided devotion suited to one's situation

Discussion Prompts

- If single, are you using this freedom for the Lord or just waiting?
- If married, where have responsibilities become an excuse for divided devotion?
- What would undivided devotion look like for you this week?

Question 5**Student Question:**

Paul insists, “each has his own gift from God, one of one kind and one of another” (1 Corinthians 7:7), placing marriage and singleness side by side as gifts. Why is it important to see both marriage and singleness as good gifts from God rather than ranking one above the other, and how does this protect the dignity of widows and the never-married within the family of God?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Verse 7 is the theological anchor of the lesson: ‘each has his own gift from God, one of one kind and one of another.’ Paul places marriage and singleness side by side as gifts (the Greek word is *charisma*, a grace-gift), each given by God, each suited to the person and the calling. This single sentence dismantles any ranking of the two states.

Draw out why refusing to rank them matters. If marriage is treated as the higher or only truly blessed state, then widows, the never-married, and the divorced are implicitly demoted, made to feel they have missed the best God offers. But if both are gifts, then no one’s station is a mark of lesser favor. The widow whose marriage has ended, the believer who never married, the person whose hoped-for marriage has not come, all hold a gift from God and a full place at His table.

Apply this especially to the dignity of widows, whom the question names. Widowhood is a station Scripture treats with great honor and tenderness (the ‘true widow’ who hopes in God, 1 Timothy 5:5). A widow has not been demoted by her loss; she remains fully honored, with her own gift and calling in this new season, often marked by deep devotion and prayer. The teacher should speak warmly to the grief of widowhood while affirming the honored place God gives the widow.

Keep marriage honored alongside singleness. The point is not to swing from exalting marriage to exalting singleness, but to hold both as good gifts. A healthy church neither idolizes marriage nor disparages it, but honors each person’s gift and station as from the hand of God.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Marriage and singleness both as ‘gifts’ (*charisma*) from God
- Refusing to rank the states protects the dignity of all
- Widows, the never-married, and the divorced as fully honored, not demoted
- The honored place of the widow (1 Timothy 5:5)
- Holding marriage and singleness together as good gifts

Discussion Prompts

- Why is it important to see both marriage and singleness as gifts?
- How does refusing to rank them protect widows and the never-married?
- How can a church honor every station without idolizing or disparaging marriage?

Question 6

Student Question:

Many people carry an unspoken belief that life truly begins (or truly ended) with marriage, that singleness is incompleteness and marriage is arrival. Where have you believed a version of this lie, that a spouse would complete you, or that without one you are less? How does the gospel speak to that belief, whatever your situation?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This self-application targets a lie that grips married and single alike: the belief that life truly begins, or is truly complete, only with marriage, that a spouse is the missing piece that finally makes a person whole. The single feel the lie as a sense of incompleteness; the married often discover its falseness when marriage fails to deliver the completeness they expected.

Connect this to the gospel and to Lesson 2. There it was said that marriage is a signpost pointing to Christ, and that no spouse can bear the weight of being another's savior or completion. The deepest longing of the human heart is met in Christ, not in marriage. A single person is not half a person awaiting completion by a spouse; in Christ they are already complete. A married person who looks to a spouse for what only Christ can give will always be disappointed. The gospel frees both from a burden no marriage can carry.

Help students name where they have believed this lie. The single may need to renounce the sense that they are less, or that their life is on hold. The married may need to repent of having asked their spouse to be their everything. Both need to relocate their sense of completeness in Christ. Invite each student to name the form the lie has taken for them and one truth of the gospel to set against it.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The lie that marriage is arrival and singleness is incompleteness
- The gospel: completeness found in Christ, not in a spouse (cf. Lesson 2)
- The single not half a person; the married freed from idolizing a spouse
- Relocating one's sense of wholeness in Christ

Discussion Prompts

- Where have you believed that a spouse would complete you, or that you are less without one?
- How does the gospel speak to that belief?
- What truth about Christ could you set against that lie?

Question 7**Student Question:**

Peter writes to wives married to husbands who 'do not obey the word,' that they may be won 'without a word by the conduct of their wives, when they see your respectful and pure conduct' (1 Peter 3:1–2). For those in a spiritually divided home, what hope and what calling does this passage hold out, and why does God so value the quiet, patient witness of a godly life in a hard household?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Here the lesson returns to 1 Peter 3:1–2 from Lesson 4, now applied specifically to the spiritually divided home, the believer married to an unbeliever or to a spouse who will not walk with the Lord. Peter's counsel is realistic and hopeful at once: such a spouse may be won 'without a word' by the conduct of the believing partner, by 'respectful and pure conduct.'

Draw out the hope. The believer in a divided home is not without power or without prospect. The quiet, consistent witness of a transformed life can reach a spouse that sermons and arguments never will. Where words have become noise, a life of evident grace, patience, purity, and peace raises a question the spouse cannot easily dismiss. Many an unbelieving husband or wife has been won, over years, by exactly this kind of witness. The teacher should hold this hope out warmly to those who feel their situation is hopeless.

Draw out the calling. The believing spouse is called to faithfulness in conduct, not to nagging, manipulation, or relentless pressure (the meaning of 'without a word'), and not to abandoning the marriage where it is merely hard rather than dangerous (recall 1 Corinthians 7, that the believer should not depart from a willing unbelieving spouse). The calling is to live so godly a life at home that the gospel becomes visible. This is demanding and often lonely, and the teacher should honor that difficulty.

Be careful and tender. 'Win him without a word' is a hopeful possibility, not a guarantee, and the teacher must not lay guilt on a faithful spouse whose partner remains hardened; the outcome belongs to God. Nor does this counsel ever require enduring abuse; as established in Lesson 4, no passage asks a spouse to submit to sin or mistreatment, and the divided home that is also a dangerous home calls for protection and wise help, not silent endurance.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- 1 Peter 3:1–2 applied to the spiritually divided home
- Hope: the silent witness of a godly life winning an unbelieving spouse
- Calling: faithful conduct, not nagging; not abandoning a merely hard marriage
- 'Win him without a word' as hopeful possibility, not guarantee
- Never a call to endure abuse; danger requires protection and help

Discussion Prompts

- What hope does this passage hold out for a spiritually divided home?
- What is the believing spouse called to, and what are they not called to?

- How can we hold out hope without laying guilt on a faithful spouse?

Question 8

Student Question:

Those married to unbelievers, or living in painful or divided homes, often feel alone and weary, tempted either to nag and pressure or to give up hope. If this is your situation, what would it look like to entrust your spouse and your home to God and to persevere in godly conduct? If it is not, how could you come alongside someone in your church who carries this burden?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This self-application speaks directly to those in divided or painful homes, and invites the rest of the church to come alongside them. Those married to unbelievers, or enduring a hard household, often feel isolated and weary, and they are tempted in two opposite directions: toward nagging and pressure (trying to force change) or toward despair (giving up hope of any change at all). Both are understandable, and both are dead ends.

Help such students find the middle path the Scriptures commend: entrusting the spouse and the home to God while persevering in godly conduct. This means praying earnestly, living faithfully, refusing both manipulation and hopelessness, and resting the outcome in God's hands rather than seizing it through pressure or surrendering it to despair. It is a posture of active trust, not passive resignation. The teacher should acknowledge how hard and lonely this is and honor the quiet faithfulness it requires.

Turn to the rest of the room, as the question does. Those not in this situation are not bystanders; they are the family of God called to bear one another's burdens. A believer carrying a hard home should not carry it alone. The church can offer companionship, encouragement, practical help, a place to belong, and steady prayer. This anticipates Lesson 12: the church is the family in which no one is left to suffer in isolation. Invite each student either to name one way to persevere in their hard home, or one way to support someone else in theirs.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The isolation and weariness of a divided or painful home
- The two temptations: pressure and nagging, or despair
- Active trust: praying, living faithfully, resting the outcome in God
- The church bearing the burden so no one suffers in isolation

Discussion Prompts

- If in a hard home, how could you entrust it to God and persevere?
- How do nagging and despair both prove to be dead ends?
- How could you come alongside someone carrying this burden?

Question 9

Student Question:

Throughout Scripture God shows particular tenderness toward the single, the widow, and the lonely, declaring Himself 'Father of the fatherless and protector of widows' who 'sets the lonely in families' (Psalm 68:5–6). Taken with these passages, how does God honor every household and every station of life as a full member of His family, neither exalting marriage as the only valid path nor lowering the single, widowed, or hard-pressed to second-class status, while still upholding His call to purity and faithfulness in every station? What does this mean for how the church should embrace everyone in it?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This is the heaviest doctrinal block, and it gathers the lesson into its central conviction: God honors every household and every station of life as a full member of His family. The teacher should ground this in God's revealed character. He is 'Father of the fatherless and protector of widows' who 'sets the lonely in families' (Psalm 68:5–6). Far from overlooking the single, the widow, and the lonely, God shows them particular tenderness and takes special responsibility for them. The God of the Bible has a heart for exactly those a marriage-centered culture tends to forget.

Hold two truths in balance, refusing to let either collapse. On one hand, God does not exalt marriage as the only valid or godly path. Singleness is good, a gift, the station of Jesus and Paul; widowhood is honored; no one is a second-class member of God's family for lacking a spouse. On the other hand, God does not lower His call to holiness in any station. The honoring of every household goes hand in hand with the New Testament's call to sexual purity and faithfulness, which the teacher should state, as throughout this study, in a measured and non-inflammatory way: God's good design reserves sexual intimacy for marriage, and every believer, single or married, is called to purity. These two truths are not in tension; honoring the single life and calling it to holiness belong together, just as honoring marriage and calling it to faithfulness do.

Draw out what this means for the church. If God honors every station, the church must too. A congregation should be a place where the single are not pitied or pressured but valued and included; where widows are not forgotten but cherished and cared for; where those in hard or divided homes are not left to struggle alone but surrounded and supported; where the divorced are not made to feel they wear a scarlet letter but are welcomed as fellow members of the family. The teacher should challenge the church to examine whether its structures, language, and culture actually communicate this honor, or inadvertently send some members to the margins.

Connect this directly to the family of God, which Lesson 12 will unfold. The answer to loneliness, for the single, the widowed, and the hard-pressed, is not only individual contentment but the embrace of a true family, the church. God 'sets the lonely in families,' and the family He has in

mind is His own household. No Christian is meant to be alone, because every Christian belongs to a family larger than any household, the family of God.

Close this question with warmth and hope. The point is not merely to correct an imbalance but to assure every person in the room of their full and honored place. Whatever your station, married or single, joyful or grieving, you are not on the outside of God's family looking in. You are a full member, honored by God, with a gift, a calling, and a place at the table.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- God's particular tenderness toward the single, widowed, and lonely (Psalm 68:5–6)
- Marriage not exalted as the only valid path; no one second-class for lacking a spouse
- The call to purity and faithfulness upheld in every station, stated in a measured way
- Honoring the single life and calling it to holiness held together
- The church challenged to honor and include every station in practice
- The family of God as the answer to loneliness (bridge to Lesson 12)

Discussion Prompts

- How does God show that He honors every station of life?
- How do we honor every household while still upholding the call to purity?
- What would it look like for our church to truly embrace everyone in it?

Question 10

Student Question:

Look back across these passages, the goodness of singleness, the gift of undivided devotion, the dignity of every station, and the hope held out to the hard home. Name one specific way you sense Jesus forming you through these verses. What is the single truth about your own station, or about honoring others in theirs, that you most need to carry into this coming week?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

The capstone gathers the lesson: the goodness of singleness, the gift of undivided devotion, the dignity of every station, the hope held out to the hard home, and God's tender honoring of the lonely. Ask each student to name one specific way Jesus is forming them, whether regarding their own station or how they honor others in theirs.

Different truths will land differently. A single believer may need to receive their season as a gift and invest it for the Lord rather than waiting for life to begin. A widow may need to hear that she is honored and not forgotten. A married person may need to repent of subtly treating singleness as second-best, or of idolizing their spouse. Someone in a divided home may need fresh hope and the resolve to persevere. Someone may be moved to come alongside a lonely or burdened member of the church. Let the Spirit choose the door.

Close on the wide welcome of God. No one in the room is on the margins of His family. The God who was Himself single in the person of His Son, who inspired a single apostle to turn the world upside down, who is Father to the fatherless and sets the lonely in families, honors every station and welcomes every member. Send students out assured of their honored place and committed to building a church family where everyone, in every situation, knows they belong.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Synthesis of singleness, devotion, the dignity of every station, and hope
- Formation meeting the single, widowed, married, and hard-pressed
- Assurance that no one is on the margins of God's family
- Commitment to a church where every member knows they belong

Discussion Prompts

- What single truth about your station or others' do you most need this week?
- Where is Jesus forming you, in contentment, devotion, hope, or honoring others?
- How can you help build a church family where everyone belongs?