

Singles Serving the Lord Without Distraction - Part 2

by Bob Hoekstra

The Lord wants a whole life for us, not just an existence, and we can find wholeness of life in Christ, not in others.

Duration: 49:37

Scripture: Deuteronomy 25:17

Topics: "Singles Ministry", "Spiritual Wholeness"

Description

This sermon emphasizes the importance of serving the Lord without distraction and with an undivided heart, finding personal wholeness and completeness in Christ. It highlights the dangers of seeking fulfillment in others or isolating oneself, urging believers to seek fullness of life in Christ alone. The message encourages serving one another in love, ministry of encouragement, kindness, forgiveness, and bearing each other's burdens, while warning against withdrawal and isolation as the enemy's tactic to target stragglers. The ultimate call is to trust in Christ for growth, service, and living with an undivided heart for the Lord.

Transcript

Let's continue in our theme on serving the Lord without distraction, serving the Lord with an undivided heart, being reminded in the Word of God how we find personal wholeness and completeness. The Lord wants a whole life for us. Jesus said, I came that you might have life and you might have it more abundantly.

The Lord wants fullness of life for us. He wants us to grow in His grace, not just eke out an existence, but have fullness of life. In Colossians 2, 9 and 10, good reminder, Colossians 2, 9 and 10, for in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily, and you are complete in Him.

Again, the natural tendency is to try to find wholeness of life in another person. Of course, people who are married, when they try to find in their mate what is only available in Christ, it's a frustration for both parties dishonoring to the Lord. In Christ dwells all the fullness, the full life, the life of godliness that our hearts yearn for and that the Lord has commanded and called us to.

There's only one who ever lived that life. The Lord Jesus Christ, and He always pleased the Heavenly Father, tempted in all points such as we are, yet without sin, full life, everything God has for us to live out, wholeness of life on earth below, it's in Christ. It's in Christ.

And the temptation to find someone who might provide that for us, the remedy is seek the Lord Jesus Christ. Wholeness of life is in Him. You know, picking up on a number of scriptures that we've looked at and interacting together with some of you, confirmations and applications of the word, you know, what could Adam have done to find a mate? Well, that's the prototype.

What can we do to get God's mate if God's called us to that? Seek God and let Him just handle that. You know, the temptation is to go on the quest, go on the hunt. Of course, effectively camouflaged, because that would be carnal, you know.

And then the temptation is to attract someone into the hunt. But of course, we wouldn't want that to be too obvious either. That also we know is carnal, you know.

So where are we? Serve the Lord without distraction. Seek undistracted devotion to the Lord. Let the Lord become increasingly the consuming reality in our lives.

And as Brother rightly reflected, but it says there in Adam's situation, it's not good that man should be alone. Yes, that's because Adam was called to a married life. If you're called to a married life, and you seek the Lord and not the end goal, the Lord will provide in His time and in His way, and He'll make something beautiful.

But if we intervene, if we get in there, oh, how we can mess it up. And it becomes a carnal adventure, you know. It's not good that man should be alone if we're called to marriage.

And all of us are called to a season of singleness again. All of us are, you know. We don't go to weddings where the bride and groom are four years old, you know, or they're born and we put a little wedding ring on them.

Everyone's called to a season of singleness, and it varies in length, and the Lord knows why and when and all of that. And then for some, they're called for a lifetime. It's a spiritual gifting, and they have a simplicity of arrangement.

Just them and the Lord is the primary partnership. For most of us, it's husband and wife and the Lord is the relational bond that makes the partnership defined. But if we're seeking the Lord for wholeness of life, completeness of life, and not other people, we're on the right track.

We're on, you know, seek the Lord in His righteousness. All of these things will be added. What things? Make a list of everything people seek after.

All of these things, and some of them are not innately bad things, innately. It can become very bad, wrongly sought after. You know, let our purpose be the Lord.

Let the result be what He does. Let's not chase the result that we think He should bring, and we lose our entire purpose. Philippians 2, 21.

Philippians 2, 21. Paul noticed a huge problem around him. For all seek their own, not the things which are of Christ Jesus.

One of the challenges the Apostle Paul had in ministry was having the Lord show him people who were not seeking their own things, their own interests, but rather seeking the things which are of Christ Jesus. There's an implication there, well, for all of life and service, certainly for this matter of being single and contrasting it, perhaps, with marriage. Many in that arena, they're just seeking their own, their own will, their own desires, their own assumption of what's needed.

God help us not to be on any level, in any arena of our lives, to be of those who seek our own things, but seek the things which are of Christ Jesus. Listen, if the Lord has given His Son for us, will He not freely with Him also give us all things, anything good that He thinks we need? Can we not trust Him? Can we not increasingly learn to trust Him? I'm not talking about flipping a switch, though sometimes it's almost like the light goes on, you know, whoa, what am I doing? Why am I not just walking in this path of trust? God help us not to be those who seek our own things, our own will. We'd rather seek the things of Christ.

You seek Christ increasingly and wholeheartedly, you get the whole package eventually along the way of who He is, what He's done, what He wants, and what He wants to do in our lives. You start seeking individual pieces of it, you find out you don't even get what you sought after. And worse than that, you miss the whole heart of the issue, which is what? Him.

Him. And this is not just a single married issue. These issues affect every person on earth, every day of their lives, all the way to the end of the pilgrimage.

We just get our own arena to see these things worked out, and the battle to be laid out. 2 Corinthians 5, 14 and 15. For the love of Christ compels us, because we judge this, that if one died for all, then all died, and He died for all.

That those who live should no longer live for themselves, but for Him who died for them and rose again. Oh, to be among those who can confess like the Apostle Paul, the love of Christ compels us. Boy, to be motivated by the love of Christ.

Sure, love for Him, but this is deeper than that, His love for us. In fact, we love Him because He first loved us. And to be compelled by that, motivated by that, driven by that, constrained by that, in the right directions and all.

I mean, this is the ultimate. And what does God do in us to help lead us in that direction? He helps us evaluate wisely, it's called here, because we judge thus. We evaluate the situation from God's perspective and conclude issues like this.

That if one died for all, then all died. Christ died for all. In the cross, there is a death to self available for all.

An end of the old life, the start of the new life. And look at the reason He died for all. That those who live, those who find new life by accepting the purpose and the effectiveness of that substitutionary death for us, which when it's embraced, we can also say, I have been crucified with Christ.

We who live, we who embrace all of that and find new life in Christ, we conclude this. We should live no longer for ourselves. Well, wasn't that where we were before we came to Christ? Isn't that where natural humanity is? They're just living for themselves.

It's about what they want. Their will, their desires, their interests, their glory. And if you're talking about resources and how you get things done, they're going to show what they've got and put it all on display.

That's living for ourselves. The more and more the love of Christ overtakes our heart and our mind, the implications of it, our desire becomes to live for Him who died for them and rose again. Boy, to be liberated from living for self and living for Christ.

And we've already have seen verses that speak of another aspect, not only living for Christ, but living from Christ. And we'll talk about that more in a moment. You know, the motive, the target, the purpose is huge.

What are we aiming at in life? The scriptures would call us, let Christ fill that. Let Him be the one you're living for. But along with that, you know, in Him is all the fullness.

How are you going to live that way? A companion is to live from Christ. You know, drawing upon Him. The fullness is there.

How do you draw upon the fullness? Faith. Abide in Christ, you'll bear much fruit. We want to live for Him? We want to live from Him so that we might live for Him.

The more I study the Word of God, the more I am amazed how issue after issue after issue after issue is tied up in Christ. I mean, it's astounding. In the world, it would be a kind of boring redundancy, you know.

In the kingdom of heaven, it is glorious majesty. Wow, show me more about how significant He is, how majestic He is, how available He is, how richly and abundantly He wants to enable us to avail ourselves of all that's in Him. Personal wholeness, completeness, which we're called to, it's found in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Beware. May I give a warning call that has been growing stronger and stronger in my own heart for, I would say, over 30, maybe 35 years of pilgrimage with the Lord and searching out the Scriptures and proclaiming them. If on your heart was a stir to give a warning in light of the things we're studying here, what would it be? I'll tell you what's on my heart.

I wrote it down the last two days. Beware of this self-centered, psychologically inundated culture that we are living in where self reigns supreme. And just as in the word, issue after issue after issue after issue, it's tied up in Christ.

He's either the object or the source or both. But in this psychological world in which we live, it's amazing how issue after issue is tied up in self. Self.

Be alert to the tragic fact that that perspective is not seeping into the church world. It is flooding in. So psychological self-interest, self-introspection, self-development, self-confidence, self-enhancement, self-fulfillment, self-improvement, self-esteem and self-love are just a way of life.

It's death. It's deadly. I personally believe it's the number one distraction from seeking the Lord with an undivided heart.

What would that be again? Self. Self. No wonder Jesus said if any man, if any person would come after me, wants to follow me, wants to walk with me, be my disciple, first thing that is said, let him deny himself.

No to the self-life. Then take up his cross. Death to the self-life.

And you might wonder what could possibly be left. All I have is this life, little me, myself and I. Yeah, the unholy trinity. What's left? Here's what's left.

And follow me. Eternity won't be enough to exhaust what we find when we follow him. That's how substantial he is.

That's how much fullness dwells in him. And that's what God offers to us. That's what God calls us to.

So, in light of these things, how are single Christians to relate to one another? Well, you could also say, how are Christians to relate to one another? It's not like some status on earth puts us into another category of Christian. The scriptures sort us out pretty simply. Believers, unbelievers.

Flesh, spirit. Earthbound, heavenbound. You know, just either or.

And then in this or category, this believing category, this faith community category, we have all kinds of circumstantial descriptions of our status. But, it's not invalid to say whatever your situation. Business person, sports person, student, whatever.

And add single or married. We can ask the question, so how should single Christians relate to one another? Immediately the thought comes to my mind, not like the world. Not like the world.

God help us to not turn the singles group into the sanctified singles bars. How are we to relate to each other? Well, since we agree we're not going to be looking to one another as, quote, the hope that will make my life complete view. How are we to relate to one another? Well, here's one.

As fellow members of the family of God. How's about that? How much guidance and help will that give us? As fellow members of the family of God. Think of ourselves as a family, not a target group or something, you know.

A family, wow. It's kind of refreshing. And some of us probably do think in those terms.

And God bless you. By word and deed, keep reminding us we're a family. And we're not a group with a plague, you know.

We're the family of God. 1 Timothy 5, 1 and 2, very interesting words for us in this context. 1 Timothy 5, 1 and 2. Do not rebuke an older man, but exhort him as a father.

Younger men as brothers. Older women as mothers. Younger women as sisters.

And then this phrase is added. With all purity. Boy, that's a great perspective, isn't it? Wow.

Boy, words like these embraced by Christians who also happen to be single and are having fellowship and study with one another. Wow. Those in the community who take those words seriously, they are a great help to all of us.

An honor to Christ. Timothy was a young man. He was told to relate to the older men as fathers, the younger men as brothers, the older women as mothers, the younger women as sisters, not targets, sisters, and with all purity.

Wow. Purity. And remember, purity is not only in action, it's in thought as well as deed.

What a good application for those who are in any kind of Christian fellowship arrangement, any kind. It certainly has its obvious implications. For those who are blessed to have an opportunity of fellowship and study and growth in a singles group, Christian singles group, let's relate to one another as the family of

God.

It's revolutionary. What a sight for the world to see. Look, they treat one another like they're family.

They can't all be from one family, but they sure act like it. Well, we are from one family. God is our Heavenly Father.

Jesus, our elder brother. Wow. What a spiritual bloodline, huh? We all love Him.

He loves us. He lives in us. He dwells among us.

He wants us to know and demonstrate the realities of the family of God. Here's another answer. How should we treat one another? How about as fellow members of the body of Christ? Ephesians 4.16, From whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effect of working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love.

We who know Christ. The fact is we are one spiritual body together. We are.

We are members of the body of Christ. We are linked together spiritually like members of a human body are physically. There is an actual interrelationship.

And we, as members of the body of Christ, we're to be drawing life from the head, the Lord Jesus Christ. See that? Ephesians 4.16. This is that companion. Not just living for Christ, but this verse teaches us to live from Christ.

In any life you live, you've got to find sufficient resource to live the life. Some wherewithal. Some sufficiency that enables functioning.

Where do we get what we need to live the Christian life? Well, some might with devotion say, well, you just, you know, if you love the Lord, just try your hardest, give it the best you have. You know, that does demonstrate devotion, but it doesn't demonstrate biblical wisdom. Because you can end up functioning according to the flesh.

Not living for the flesh or indulging the flesh, but trying to produce a godly life from the flesh. It doesn't work. God's not called us to that.

This is new birth is a miracle from above. Daily ongoing growth is to be a miraculous work of God deep in the heart of man. We've seen that already.

So from whom the whole body? Who is this pronoun referring to? Previous verse, Christ. Brothers, sisters, think of it. We are so blessed.

We're blessed beyond measure. We actually have available to us day by day, as our resource for living, the very life that is found in the Lord Jesus Christ. In fact, Colossians 3, 4 says, Christ who is our life.

He dwells in our hearts. He wants to express the reality of his presence there, right through our life, where his life is becoming our life. By seeking him, trusting him, learning of him, counting upon him.

From whom? How do you do that? Well, the just shall live by faith. Faith. Without faith, it's impossible to please God.

Ideally, each and every day, trusting the Lord to work in and through us, as we set our hope upon him. Learn of who he is and what he's done in the word, so our faith will grow in him to work in this area, that area, the other area. From whom? The whole body.

Every Christian, young, old, married, single. Every Christian must draw daily upon the reality of the life in Christ to live the life we're called to live before God. From whom? The whole body.

This is not something missionaries, pastors do and others don't. We all have equal need, we all have equal resource. Our need is total.

Apart from me, you can do nothing. You know what nothing means? It means if you're going to do anything that has spiritual benefits, spiritual blessings, spiritual reality, anything that can save a soul, transform a life, bring honor to God, bless someone else, in a true heavenly sense, it has to source from the Lord himself. From whom? The whole body.

Our need is comprehensive, but our resource is total. Colossians 3.11 calls Christ our all in all. Without him we can do nothing.

With him I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me. He's our resource. So from him, by faith, we call upon him, we count upon him, we look to him.

And then he wants to join and knit us together. While he's changing our lives, he wants to weave us into other lives. He wants to do this work by what every joint supplies.

Physical human bodies have joints. The spiritual body of Christ has spiritual joints. Language is that which would describe a human body.

But the point is the unseen spiritual realm of the body of Christ. All Christians worldwide. One body in Christ.

One head. One life we need, and he's got it. Then he wants to knit us together.

Like a human body is joined and woven. And in that body there are joints. There are joints in the body of Christ.

What is a joint, a spiritual joint in the body of Christ? Well, if you think of an elbow, you have one member, the lower arm, another member, the upper arm. There's a joint where the two members are functioning together under the instructions of the head. And it supplies the whole body.

Maybe the simplest example is it supplies food. And those, just that one joint with those two members supplying in their service under the head the entire body. What a picture.

What a simple profound picture. And these are the very terms used to describe the body of Christ. To describe us.

How about thinking of one another in those terms? Developing relationships with one another under the head Christ. Not with a personal hidden agenda, but just the Lord's will done in His way in His time, and by His work in and through us, and among us. Wow, this is miraculous.

This is supernatural living. This changes everything. And in that, it's according to the effective working by which every part does its share.

Every member in the body of Christ has a valuable contribution in Christ and from Christ. And in their calling and their gifts. Just like in a human body, every part does its share.

In a healthy, abiding in Christ demonstration of the spiritual body of Christ, everyone has a contribution to make. Every part does its share. What happens in this? This causes the growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love.

In love. Loving God because He loves us, and loving one another with a Christ-like love. Not a human, flawed, selfish, impure love.

But a Christ-like love. Just wanting God's best for other people in the family of God. And even being willing to actually be an instrument of that blessing.

Oh yes, I want God's best blessing for everyone. But I can't get involved. Praise the Lord Christ didn't approach it that way.

How involved did He get? Left glory above, came to this sin-scarred world. He lied about, beaten, conspired against, wrongly murdered in the most shameful manner that we might have salvation. Wow, that's love.

And this is love. Not that we love God, but that He loved us and sent His Son as a propitiation for our sins. That's love.

And when that just takes over your heart and mind more and more, you really desire, don't you? To be an instrument of that to others. Boy, that just in itself has huge built-in safeguards and the expectation of phenomenal blessing. You notice what a blessing it is to bless people in the name of the Lord? I've seen some doctors lately on some physical maladies, and I'm used to hanging around a lot of Christians a lot of the time, and the doctor's office has become my outreach lately.

And, you know, without thinking, this receptionist said, How are you today, Mr. Hoekstra? And I just, I didn't even think a second. I said, You know, I am so blessed today. And there were about five nurses there, and I could almost hear necks popping, like, What did he say? Like it was weird, you know? And then the receptionist kind of lit up, and she said, Well, you know, I'm really blessed today, too.

It turned out we had some fellowship in the Lord right there across the counter, you know? What a blessing it is to be an instrument of blessing. And it really doesn't take anything but the Lord, you know? Our God is a God of blessing, and He loves to bless people. It doesn't take a lot.

It just takes the Lord, you know? His presence. And just our Lord worked in me, worked through me, make me a blessing. And in this building up of the body of Christ, loving and serving one another with the love we find from our head, the Lord Jesus, the entire body is growing and built up in His love.

And really, very much related to that is one another ministry you find in the body of Christ and in the Scriptures. Have you noticed it? I commend it to you. Watch for the phrase one another, and watch God build a vision of ministry in the most simple kind of relationship.

One another. You know, where one blesses the other, but the other blesses the one because it's a one another relationship. And there are many of them in the Scriptures, the ultimate love one another, receive one another, prefer one another in honor.

There is a vast arena of ministry available to every Christian who's just willing to be used one toward another. And then when the other wants to be used back to the one, oh, the body's just getting strengthened and encouraged and built. 1 Thessalonians 5.11 is one of these.

I'll just mention a couple of them before we conclude. 1 Thessalonians 5.11 has a couple of them in it. Therefore, comfort, or it could be translated encourage each other, and edify one another, just as you also are doing.

The saints at Thessalonica, they ministered one to another. What a great example to us. How can we be a blessing in the hands of God in the building up of the body of Christ, treating each other as we should, fellow members of the body of Christ, just be willing to be available in one another ministry.

You're one Christian. Every time you meet another Christian, there's ministry opportunity. And all of us know many Christians.

You know how huge our ministry field is, just by the people we already know who are Christians in the body of Christ, and the ways we're called to minister to them that are so simple. Therefore, encourage each other. Ministry of encouragement.

Oh, this is huge. The number one issue that tears down so many saints and slows down their ministry and their walk and their growth is discouragement. Isn't that true? Haven't you seen it in your own life? I sure have.

And I've seen it in the body of Christ. There's so much out there in the world and too much in the church world that is just discouraging if you just look at that alone. But you start thinking of who the Lord is and He's present and active and He's greater as He was in us and He was in the world, and we can give a word of encouragement to one another.

Just reminding each other the Lord is for us and not against us. That's a good one to remember. Encourage one another.

And edify. Build up one another. The enemies, He's out there to tear us down.

The world tears you down. In the family of God, we can build each other up reminding each other the faithfulness of God, the commitment of God to us, the work of God in us. Here's another one.

Ephesians 4.32. Ephesians 4.32. Two of them here. And be kind to one another. Have you ever thought of the glory and impact of a ministry of kindness to people? I was in another doctor's office recently and I noticed that this lady behind the counter was quite unkind to those who walked in there.

It's like these patients were an interruption in her peace of mind. She's just so unkind. And I met her and I thought, you know, I probably should be ready for some unkindness to come.

And she didn't disappoint me. You know, I asked a question about something, you know, and she just kind of bit my head off, as they say. Not a very good bite for her to swallow, but it was real.

And thank the Lord by His Spirit. It just stirred my heart, you know, for a quick prayer. And I prayed that I might be enabled to be very kind to her.

And the Lord gave me a couple of kind words. And then I went and saw the doctor and that came out later. And I stopped particularly praying in my heart, Lord, let me add another kind word.

And do you know what? In just that few minutes of cumulative, first time ever relationship, all of a sudden, she started talking nice to me, you know. Well, there's an open door. That's just one little recent event that reminds me, being kind to one another is a huge ministry.

The world's not a nice place. Oh, people put on, you know, a professional, you know, you're just the greatest here on earth and I'm here to help you, you know. And you can see in their eyes, you know from the Bible, they've got their own agenda, you know.

But to really be kind, just to be nice to one another, what a refreshing ministry. And you know what it's based upon? God is nice. Oh, give thanks unto the Lord for He is good and His mercy endures forever.

And forgive one another. Oh, the world's a spiteful place, a vengeful place. And carnal Christians can think and walk and talk just like the world.

You know, when we're not drawing from that life that's in Christ, think of this, this is sober. We are drawing upon the same resource that the world lives by every day. What's that? The flesh.

Boy, that's sobering. But we don't have to live and think that way. The world's vengeful.

How about us being forgiving to one another? Wow, huge. Galatians 5, 13, serving one another. The world wants to be served.

Oh, what a radical difference. We can be servants of all. Galatians 6, 2, bearing one another's burdens.

Oh, glorious. What a ministry. These are just some of the Bible answers to the question how single Christians are to relate to one another.

One last area, and then we'll conclude. You call this last area, why withdrawal and isolation are so dangerous. Temptation in life, it can get so hard, so challenging, and even in relationships with the household of faith that we just want to get way back out on the edge, you know, just barely attached to it all.

Why that is so dangerous. Deuteronomy 25, verses 17 and 18. Israel marching toward the promised land.

Some of their number lagging back behind, and the enemy is targeting them. Deuteronomy 25, 17. Remember what Amalek did to you on the way when you were coming out of Egypt.

How he met you on the way and attacked your rear ranks. All the stragglers at your rear. When you were tired and weary, and he, Amalek, the enemy, did not fear God.

Couple that with 1 Peter 5, 8, our last scripture. Be sober, be vigilant. Vigilant, I mean.

Be sober, be vigilant. Kind of mixing that with diligence. Be sober, be vigilant, because your adversary, the devil, walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.

You know the enemy does not want to stub our toe. He wants to gobble up our life. As Israel had enemies of old, God's people today still have an enemy who is prowling around.

Today he's looking for those withdrawn from life in the body of Christ. Those who isolate themselves. Become stragglers like the early Israelites who got devoured.

Thinking that's the easiest way to go. That's the safest way to go. I'll just protect myself.

I'll stay away from potential hurt or inconvenience that may come from involvement with Christian godly relationship and ministry. Surely the enemy looks on with delight, knowing that these stragglers are still today the easiest target he has among the people of God. All in all, the call of the scripture has been to come serve the Lord without distraction.

May we be those who seek the Lord for increased growth in actually serving the Lord that way. Let's pray together, shall we? Lord, it's just so great to know you. We're so thankful of your love commitment for us.

We're so glad to be the people of God. Thank you for your great patience with us, your long suffering. When we aren't maybe pursuing you and focusing on you and get off on self and fulfillment of our own desires and plans.

Lord, we just pray that you would do that deep heart work that we've looked at today in Ezekiel. A new heart, a soft heart, your spirit dwelling within a regenerated spirit within our heart. And us seeking you, Lord, and you becoming the spiritual cause, the dynamic of godly growth and service with an undivided, undistracted heart.

Lord, we're looking to you to be doing that in and through us, we pray. In Jesus' name, amen.

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