EMBRACE the TABLE
round us has expectations of singles are not, and then speculate: happens in TV shows, expectations of boldiness of a dinner table set for successes of success and failure happens rather than a solid foundation of there is no absolute truth. When the completeness is set by advertisements, therefore have received Christ and built up in Him and established taught, abounding in it with the instruction of men, according to the instruction of men, according to Christ. For in
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53 PERCENT of all meals are eaten at a table for one in the United States
A Word to Group Leaders

Leader, as you prepare to teach your group, we encourage you to apply the material with your specific group as God leads. For that reason, consider this guide an overview rather than a traditional curriculum. We want you to embark on a journey with your group during the next six sessions as you talk about issues relevant to singles. Our goal for your time together is to help individuals in your group fully understand they are Complete in Christ. He is the foundation for all other relationships.

Each session is guided with a brief Blog followed by an Ice Breaker, Scripture Spotlight, and Life Application. Each session ranges from 30-60 minutes depending on the amount of conversation and size of your group. We encourage each session to end in Pinpointed Prayer for a specific aspect of each member’s life in relation to the particular session’s main theme. Before you received this material and during your participation, we are praying God changes the lives of you and your group members. We love to hear stories of life change! Please email us at info@tfoministries.org and, with permission, we will share these stories on our blog and social media.

For some of you preparing to teach from this guide, you may have married young, married more than once, or are currently single. Take two minutes and watch from the eyes of a single adult what the world often says to singles.

Video: tfoministries.org/complete-in-christ

Did some of the comments in the video seem unreal? Have you said something similar to a single adult? Have you as a single adult heard them? All of these comments are real. We surveyed singles to gather the phrases they hear most often and the video depicts the top of the list. As you prepare for this study on “Embracing the Table,” here are some of the most compelling facts about singles:

» According to the U.S. Census, the average age of a first marriage is 29 for men and 27 for women.

» The median age of a first divorce in the U.S. is 30 and 45-50% of marriages end in divorce. On average, singles who remarry take three years to do so after their divorce.
» Over 40% of all parents in America are single parents.

» Of the total 13 million single parents in America, 10 million are women.

» In the U.S., there are more than 102 million unmarried people, over 44% of the total adult population.

» Of those who are single, 62% have never married. Another 24% are divorced and 14% are widowed.

» In 2015, the U.S. Labor Bureau announced for those in the workforce over the age of 18, singles outnumber married adults.

» 53% of all meals eaten in the U.S. are eaten alone.

» For every 100 unmarried women in the U.S., there are 89 unmarried men.

» The average term of engagement in America is 16 months and most couples have known each other for three or more years.

» The average age of a widow is 57 years old and on average they live 14 years beyond their spouse’s death.
**Who Are Single Adults?**

Singles are unique. Every type of single adult listed below has a specific way to be reached and ministered to. These labels are not meant to place singles into different ways of being ministered. Quite the opposite. Once you know who you want to reach, you need to know how to reach them. Your church should be reaching and connecting singles in whatever way they choose to be discipled.

**Singles Never Married**
Adults who have never married and may or may not be looking to date.

**Dating Singles**
Singles actively looking to date and may or may not be in a relationship currently.

**Engaged Singles**
Singles who are engaged with a ring on the finger; however, they are not married yet and are still single.

**Divorced Singles**
Singles who have been married and the legal divorce documents have been signed by a judge.

**Single Parents**
Parents of children who are not married. This includes single parents who are divorced, widowed, have adopted, or had a child out of wedlock. Never assume how a single became a parent.

**Widows**
Singles who did not choose to be single when their spouse passed.
Session 1

Marriage is not the Finish Line
Blog

The big day is here! Here comes the bride all dressed in white, the groom looking like an overachiever in his rented tux involved in a ceremony that moves even the hardest of hearts to tears; then, the reception with a toast from the father of bride pronouncing how proud he is. His little girl found a husband. Glasses raised silently imply a secret achievement unlocked, and now the happy couple continues life side-by-side.

Singles. Get. It. At the celebration everyone seems happy for the couple who reached the perceived monumental achievement. But, in reality, is marriage the finish line? Singles often anticipate the next milestone or marker in life. At some point, they may feel the only thing left is marriage, when in actuality its not a marker, achievement, or the finish line.

For married couples the next bombardment of expectation is kids. And while having a pet or three may seem like a substitute for a time, the next finish line is a child. Once that line is crossed, and often no less than a day after the first child arrives, there are questions of when the next baby will come along. Once baby two arrives an expectation of a third child. But, if baby four happens, comments of birth control fill the air. Then the markers of high school graduation, college graduation, then a job, then the cycle begins again with a wedding.

Even though the finish line is defined by a relationship, it’s not the one the world teaches us to seek. Being Complete in Christ is the only relationship that will leave you complete. All other relationships build from a God-centered life. Living for God is grounded in a relationship with Christ. A Christ-centered life will naturally overflow to others. Measuring your life by the standards of the world is futile. Follow Christ who paid our sins in full to live abundantly, and to make a difference with the limited time we each have on earth.
Icebreaker

› If you have been to a wedding before, what is the most awkward part of the wedding for you?

› Is there someone in your life pushing you to get married right now? How does that make you feel?

› Do you think society sees marriage as a big achievement? Why or why not?

Leader Overview

Session One’s goal is to articulate a “Table for One” experience and explore the false premise that marriage is a major milestone for the single adult. Participants will explore the issue of marriage, how it affects their daily lives, and how and why to accept living for Christ in their current relationship status.

Biblical marriage is established by God as a life-long covenant between one man and one woman. Marriage is intended to be the perfect example of Christ’s relationship with His church as a living example of the gospel of forgiveness, grace and mercy. Marriage provides the only godly channel for physical intimacy between a man and woman. Additionally, marriage is God’s plan for procreation and is vital to fulfill His will for mankind and His kingdom. As Believers, we need to promote an active Christian single lifestyle. One that does not wait on marriage to fulfill a much-needed Christ-like role in the world today.

Scripture Spotlight

Read 2 Timothy 4:1-8 to your group. Read at least two versions of Scripture to hear the passage in a different tone. In his final years of ministry, Paul wrote to Timothy from prison and urged him to visit and shared a somber reminder that the “finish line” of his life was fast approaching.

› How does Paul define the race he is running?
» In Paul’s charge, what does it say about people not following Christ in the times ahead?

» In Paul’s charge, what should believers in Christ follow in the days ahead?

» What hardships does Paul refer to in verse 5? Are the hardships any different now than they were when the book was written?

» What “Day” is Paul referring to in verse 8?

» What does “keeping the faith” look like as a Christ follower?

» How do we “fight the good fight” in our everyday lives?

Life Application

Marriage does not define a life. In 2 Timothy 4:1-8 we learn how a life lived for Christ is not defined by marriage, but instead by following Christ’s will. In these passages, we explore how a text written by Paul more than 2,000 years ago is just as true and relevant today. In 1 Corinthians 7:17, Paul instructs each of us to live as Christ has called us, not as we think our life needs to be defined. Paul’s instruction applies to marriage, which may or may not happen for you. But the reality is, it does not matter. What matters is living a God-honoring life, Complete in Christ. In Matthew 22:36-40, Christ followers are called to love God and love others. Singles are not immune from this command.

A “Table for One” experience is not something of which to be ashamed. It does not define the “race” you are running as your follow Christ. Living for Christ in your current life situation is the key.

Application Questions

» Knowing marriage is not the finish line, what priorities might you shift in your life?

» In the coming week, what can you do to follow Christ more than last week?

» In your life, where do you need to “keep the faith” more than you did last week?

» Share your lesson with someone this week.
Pinpointed Prayer

How can your group specifically pray for you to adjust your priorities in the coming week? Write down prayer requests and distribute to the group. Select a member of the group to share their testimony for the following meeting time. Leaders, take time to share your testimony with your group. Close in prayer.

More to Know

Table for One Ministries’ mission is to build community for single adults through discipleship. Our ministry focus is helping singles to fully realize their completeness in Christ. We affirm the importance of marriage and believe being Complete in Christ is not just for singles, but for everyone no matter their relationship status. Additionally, while we desire to help churches reach and minister to the ever-growing single population, we want to acknowledge the importance of marriage in God’s redemptive plan for this world.

We affirm that biblical marriage is established by God as a life-long covenant between one man and one woman. Marriage is intended to be the perfect example of Christ’s relationship with His church and a living example of the gospel of forgiveness, grace and mercy. Marriage provides the only acceptable channel for physical intimacy between a man and woman. Additionally, marriage is God’s plan for procreation and is vital to fulfill His will for both mankind and His kingdom.

We believe in the institution of marriage, yet we recognize there are many Christians who are single for numerous reasons. Our goal is to contribute to the wide-ranging singles community and guide each individual, no matter their marital or relational status, to desire and develop a deep and intimate relationship with Christ. We want to promote the active Christian single lifestyle that does not wait on marriage to fulfill a much needed Christ-like role in the world today.
40 PERCENT of all parents are single parents