

So...You're Single

Resolve to the Single Question

Let's consider the Christian single man, the Christian single woman. Healthy. Strong. Vivacious. Educated. He knows what he wants. She knows what she wants. They meet through a Christian social event or are introduced by a mutual friend. They get to know each other. They fall madly in love. They get married in a dream wedding, escape on a romantic honeymoon trip to the Bahamas, and live happily ever after. End of story.

Isn't there something wrong with this picture? Certainly, most Christian

singles who have "come into their own" are looking for their life partner. And there are Christian singles who have gone through most of the steps toward marriage and are now living in wholesome marriage relationships with a fair and balanced approach to life, trusting in God for grace and guidance every step of the way. We should praise God for those who have found their ministry partner as a result of their faithful journey toward this all-important life goal.

The reality of the single life in today's culture couldn't be

further from this fairy tale. Millions of Christian singles have found this area of their lives challenging. Many have gone in search of happiness only to find frustration in the end. Many have looked tirelessly within the church and have come up empty, bearing little or nothing in return as a result of their search. And for other significant reasons, many Christian singles have not been able to walk down the aisle and say "I do." It would seem that in every passing season the date for the wedding is pushed forward into the unknown future.

The Stats

To put singles in perspective, a study by the Barna Research Group, a Christian research firm, was performed and documented on singles in the United States. The qualified team of researchers discovered that in the 2000 U.S. Census, 28% of the United States population are considered singles—those who have never been married before—with 32 million being men and 28 million being women.¹ This percentage is up approximately 5% from figures reported in the 1950s.

The study also includes figures on the differences in the median age of singles who do get married. George Barna said: “In the past, there was a social stigma associated with reaching your 20s and not being married. Today, however, the median age of a first marriage has risen to 25 among women and 27 among men.”² And by the way, for women who articulate that there are no single men out there, you would be delighted to know that Barna discovered that there are four million more males who have never been married than there are single females!³ Why are there so many available singles?

The Reasons

There are numerous reasons why young adult singles have not taken this sacred step; several of them are observable. For one thing, singles have experienced pressures that delay their commitment to a relationship of this manner. Singles are pressured to be competitive in their educational pursuits. Constantly bombarded with society’s quest for excellence, singles who desire to live full, prosperous and productive lives have no choice but to be competitive in their interests and goals. Society frowns on individuals who cannot make up their minds

because they are too busy “weighing their options.”

Singles then graduate from the pressures of education to the pressures of profession. This creates a two-fold sense of anxiety and demands as singles move from the classroom to the boardroom. Always driven to meet deadlines, to succeed above and beyond co-workers, to set goals and reach them, ultimately to be promoted to higher positions and given substantial rewards, singles are forever conscious of the need to succeed in their field of interest. After all, singles want to succeed and do well in their profession. While educational, vocational, and other life pursuits are positive and

to have some company. The average single who is looking for his or her life partner already knows that time is of the essence. A rush to marriage because of the ticking clock is not a wise choice. And with the divorce rate skyrocketing, not only within this pluralistic secular society at large, but even in the Christian church community, a rush down the aisle with the wrong person is neither a healthy move nor a spiritually wise decision to embrace.

There is also a sense that if one is single his or her wholeness is in question, and it is almost suggested that if one is not married then the end of the world is in sight! Thus, instead of feeling content in one’s station in life, feelings of inadequacy and sometimes, self-pity set in. Yet, how can singles make wise choices for their future when these attitudes surround them?

Finally, Christian singles debate what God’s ultimate purpose for their lives is. There are some singles who debate God’s timing and choosing as to when and whom they should marry. There are quite a few singles who are simply “wait-

ing on the Lord.” Others are hoping that Mr. Right or Ms. Right will somehow fall from the sky with little or no effort. There are those who have made this issue a matter of prayer, placing the top ten qualities of someone they can envision themselves living with on a sheet of paper, and every day communing with God according to their heart’s desire.

Yet, it would seem that some singles have waited on the Lord in vain and they have also come to that dreaded realization that the perfect Mr. or Ms. Right will never fall from the sky. Furthermore, it would appear that the individuals they meet from time to time score high on the least of the ten quali-

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important goals to attain, could they be contributing factors as to why singles have not taken the marriage step?

Singles are also sounding boards for attitudes toward themselves and their station in life. Although friendly introductions, prayerful considerations, and creative environments suited for multiple set-ups are welcome, such comments as “Eligible bachelor man and you’re not married!” or “Lady like you and you’re not snatched yet?” and “Don’t you know that your clock is ticking?” are “turn-off” comments.

I have often wondered to myself if the individuals making such comments to me have my best interests at heart or if they want their misery





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ties they look for in a life partner, and have the lowest score in the greatest of the qualities they have outlined. And is God so cruel as to not answer prayers and provide the desires of the heart?

The Resolve

For Christian singles who have been waiting faithfully on God, I encourage you. Do not be discouraged and overwhelmed by the pressures of life or the whimsical attitudes of people. And I ask this of you: Do not be locked into a debate with God. Stop for a moment. Consider some valuable ideas out there that can answer the single question. What can I do?

First, you need to find your purpose in life. God's purpose is that all would take this sacred step toward marriage and be faithful in it. He says in the book of Genesis that "It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper comparable to him."⁴ Thus, God set about creating an opportunity for the first single individuals to have a marriage relationship. God created us for that purpose, and if this is your desire, stay faithful toward that goal. However, there are singles who believe that they were called to remain

single for a specific purpose. If that is your calling, then you, too, stay faithful to God in all aspects.

Be clear of your purpose as a child of God. Whatever goal you have set for your life, and if and when your state changes, live it to the fullest in relationship to Him. Don't think that something is wrong with you because you are single. Singleness is a powerful place to be. Accept your singleness; accept each stage in your life and live it holistically.

Secondly, purpose also involves ministry. Search for opportunities to avail yourself to Him in service. Whether marriage is for you or not, be cognizant of the fact that as a Christian single God has blessed you with the gift of time. Be mindful that this gift must be used wisely. Some of us spend most of God's valuable time whining and complaining instead of utilizing it creatively. I like the way Holly Virden and Michelle McKinney Hammond, singles ministry gurus, put it. They said: "We have so much potential with our time but often carelessly let the days slip through our fingers waiting, pining, hoping—anything but acting."⁵

Our valuable time should be used actively in ministry. That is our God-ordained task as stewards of the gospel and our time. Even Paul hoped that some in the Corinthian church were single just like him so they could dedicate their free time to the work of the gospel.⁶ Because of this gift, we should find every opportunity to turn this world upside-down for Jesus Christ. Find a ministry that embraces your talents, and if there aren't any and people's needs are still outstanding, then create one. Your life will, in turn, develop and have more meaning than you initially realized.

Thirdly, create a vision and mission statement for your life. Vision and mission statements aren't only reserved for big corporations, organizations, and mega-churches. Every human being should have personal statements that drive what they do and hope to accomplish in their future. If your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit,⁷ albeit a human church, then with His help, you need to create your own vision and mission statements that serve as fundamental guides to your existence. You may have some dreams. You may have some desires.

Chart the most important goals you wish to achieve. List those goals next to some timelines. Make sure they are reasonable, measurable, and achievable. The proverb expressed by the wise man Solomon is true: "Where there is no vision, the people perish..."⁸ Where there is no personal vision for your life, you will sit around feeling sorry for yourself and invite unneeded, inquisitive sympathizers to your pity-party.

Fourthly, utilize all the options available to form and preserve enduring friendships. Do not be afraid to join other Christian singles at bowling nights, concerts, socials, small groups, and retreats to meet new people and to form new ties and networks. Not

every friendship will lead to marriage. However, every true friendship would have the potential to teach you something new about yourself. Every true friendship will open your eyes to what you want in life, what you need to develop as a person, what you need to nurture, and what you need to remove out of your present reality. Who knows, perhaps one of those friendships could be the impetus to an introduction, a referral, or a meet-up—only in God’s timing.

Finally, seek God’s guidance as you contemplate marriage. Don’t make decisions without God in the lead. It’s careless and even tragic. You don’t want to live the rest of your life in an unhappy position. Put your desires in an envelope and mail them to the Lord in prayer. Even more than that, because God knows your desires, and because God is your father, you could go boldly, with confidence, to Him on this challenging issue. Outline the top ten qualities or the top 20 qualities you wish for in a life partner. Write them down on paper. You know what you want. God knows what you want. During your devotional moments, provide ample time to allow for quality communion with God on this matter.

I have come to realize the significance of communing with God in my own single life. My prayer life has gone to another level simply because I have come to consider this journey a critical part of my life. I cannot afford to be haphazard or lazy when it comes to this sacred decision. Prayer is so critical an issue that Ellen G. White urges doubled efforts in prayer. She very passionately counsels: “If men and women are in the habit of praying twice a day before they contemplate marriage, they should pray four times a day when such a step is anticipated.”⁹ She goes on to suggest that “Marriage is something that will influence and affect

your life, both in this world and in the world to come.”¹⁰ Doubled prayer is critical to this decision.

Therefore, Christian singles, put the pressures of life into perspective. Put the attitudes of others into reality, and put your debating sessions with God in check. When you have put these five points of resolve into action, you would have no need to be overcome by any of the negatives. Stay within God’s purpose. Live within God’s will. You are guaranteed happiness if you do. ☺

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1. George Barna, SINGLE FOCUS: UNDERSTANDING SINGLE ADULTS, pp. 13, 14.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid, p. 7.
4. NKJV (New King James Version), Genesis 2:18.
5. Holly Virden and Michelle McKinney Hammond, IF SINGLENESS IS A GIFT, WHAT’S THE RETURN POLICY?, p. 106.
6. NKJV, 1 Corinthians 7:6-8.
7. Ibid, 3:16, 6:19.
8. KJV (King James Version), Proverbs 29:18.
9. Ellen G. White, MESSAGES TO YOUNG PEOPLE, p. 460.
10. Ibid.

New North American Division Single Adult Ministries (NAD ASAM) Coordinator Appointed

Andrea D. Hicks, a member of the Mount Sinai Seventh-day Adventist Church in Queens, New York (Northeastern Conference), was recently appointed the new Adventist Single Adult Ministries coordinator for the North American Division. In this position Hicks will interact with the NAD ASAM network to share information on new resources and initiatives for the ministry, assist the webmaster in the management of the ASAM Web site, serve as the vice chair of the NAD ASAM committee, work with the NAD Family Ministries director to manage ministry initiatives, and represent NAD ASAM at various engagements deemed to enhance the effectiveness of NAD ASAM.



Hicks has been involved with singles ministries since 2001. She founded F.O.C.U.S. Ministries (Fellowship of Christians Unique and Single) in February 2001. F.O.C.U.S. Ministries is now a team of dedicated singles who plan exciting functions such as retreats, cruises, picnics, lunches, bowling, and mixers with singles ministries groups from other Adventist churches throughout the New York tri-state area and abroad.

Hicks is also active in other areas, including serving as a member of the Atlantic Union Adventist Media Operations Committee in New York City, assisting the Northeastern Conference Singles Ministries director, managing the a capella recording group, Men of Israel, and she is very active in her home church.

Visit the Adventist Single Adult Ministries Web site at www.adventistsingleadultministries.org.