

Singlehearted – Living Victoriously in the Season Called “Single”  
by Barbara Wright

I still remember the first time I heard a Single Adults pastor proclaim, "Life does not begin at marriage-life begins at conception." That was a radical Christian concept in 1977 when single adults were mostly considered "half persons looking for their other half so they could become whole."

Little did I know then that in 2002 AD I would still be a single adult. Little did I know then that the largest segment of my adult life to date would be in ministry to single adults. Little did I know then how prophetic I was when I used to joke about my qualifications for writing a mythical book entitled, *Single Through The Decades*.

That Single Adults Pastor went on to encourage our group in 1977 that, "Marriage is God's general will for everyone, but singleness may be a special life gift for some and a gift for all for a portion of life." He challenged each of us to believe that God's intention was nothing less than His radical best for our lives. And rather than putting life on hold until marriage, he stirred us to become fully committed NOW to God's intention for our lives.

I took Ken Malmin's words to heart that year. I dared to believe what the Bible said about me was true. I dared to believe that I was complete in Him (Col. 2:10); that He knew me before I was in my mother's womb (Jer. 1:5); that a book of my life was written about me before I was even born (Ps. 139:16); that the plans He had toward me were plans of good and not of evil to give me a future and a hope (Jer. 29:11).

I dared to believe that the God who created the universe and Who sent His only Son to pay the penalty of death for my sin actually knew all about my life and the plans He had for it and that He would withhold no good thing from me if I walked uprightly before Him (Ps. 84:12).

A quarter of a century has elapsed and I've proven all of those Scriptural suppositions to be true. And although I didn't set a goal to be single at the age of 53, I can truthfully say this is the happiest leg of my journey thus far.

Oh please, don't misunderstand me. I'm not a professional single. I'm not a crusader, picketing for "singles rights"! In fact, I used to jokingly tell the college classes I instructed that I paid "finder's fees"! I'm a single woman by divorce. But, it was the wonderful sovereignty of God that at the age of 17 this unchurched, worldly girl married a backslidden hippie who led her to the Lord. The conversion lasted; the marriage did not.

Despite my own experience, I love the institution of marriage. I love weddings, but I love decade-enduring marriages even more. From what I have observed over 35 years, that transition from a season of singleness to the lifetime commitment of marriage is accomplished best with two emotionally and spiritually "whole" single adults.

The purpose of this article is not to tell you everything you ever wanted to know about singleness. Nor is it to contrast the virtues of marriage vs. singleness. A resource list follows this article that you may find helpful for that purpose.

The purpose of this article is to encourage single adults (and those who minister to them) to place significant value NOW on this critical season of life called "single." The questions are not, "just how long is this season anyway?" or "when exactly will I be married?" The real question is, "what will I accomplish for God while I am still single?"

Five Recommendations for Living Successfully in the Season called "Single"

***1. Become preoccupied with the purposes of Jesus Christ in your life.***

Become absorbed, gripped, fascinated, riveted and consumed with seeking first the Kingdom of God. Know Him first; know Him best. Rather than focusing on your singleness as proof of some defect in your life ("After all," your mind may tell you, "if there wasn't something wrong with me, I'd be married by now, right?"). It is appropriate to take stock of your own "marriageability" (see point #3), but self-absorption will detract from the important things God wants to do in and through you during this season.

Let your testimony echo one of the most fruitful single adults of all time-the Apostle Paul, when he said, "...I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me..." (Phil. 3:12).

***2. Don't be deceived by the "mystique" of marriage.***

The mystique of marriage is the mindset that says, "If I were married, then all my problems would be solved. Marriage is the cure! As soon as I get married, I won't be lonely, confused, tired, lustful, depressed, or (fill in the blank) anymore. Wouldn't it be great if marriage were the great panacea of life?"

Unfortunately, that is magical thinking-it's deception. Magical thinking is not the product of a renewed mind. It is a trap to get you distracted from your real Source, which is Jesus Christ. And although marriage is a wonderful, delightful, rewarding and enduring institution (or so my friends tell me), marriage alone is not an antidote to the stress points of life.

- ***Marriage is not the cure for lust***-self-control is. Learn self-control now as a single person; you will need it even after marriage.
- ***Marriage is not the cure for loneliness***-an intimate relationship with Jesus Christ is. Develop that intimacy with Christ now as a single adult and you'll save yourself from much disappointment after marriage.
- ***Marriage is not the cure for depression***-joy is. And true joy comes from consistently choosing to believe what God says about you, your situation, and your future. Increase your faith now as a single so that you can become a great source of encouragement to your spouse or to countless others to whom the Lord would allow you minister.

### ***3. Work constantly on becoming the kind of person to whom you'd like to be married.***

Use this season of singleness to deal honestly with life issues that would hinder a marriage relationship. Examine yourself, spirit, soul and body. What type of "spirit-soul-body" person do you want to marry? Then recognize that's who you need to become in Christ.

- ***Spirit.*** Do you want to marry someone who is passionate for God? Someone who demonstrates the fruit of the Spirit in daily life? Someone who is actively using spiritual gifts and abilities? If this is the type of person you'd like to marry, then you need to examine your own life using the same criteria. If you find spiritual pride or a lack of zeal or a lukewarm heart, then be honest with yourself and with your Heavenly Father. Humble yourself, admit your weaknesses, ask God for more grace, more Divine enablement to be who He has called you to be.
- ***Soul.*** This is your mind, your will, and your emotions. Do you want to marry a person who has a "sound mind," who is pliable and obedient to commands of Scripture, and whose emotions are under control? Then carefully examine those areas of your own life and again, in humility, seek more Divine assistance to help you to change those weak areas.
- ***Body.*** Do you want to marry someone who is healthy, who is a good caretaker of the temple of the Holy Spirit, who eats healthfully, exercises regularly, and who rests wisely? Then seek to become that person by the grace of God. Forget about comparing yourself to some image on a magazine cover-just be obedient to practice what you know is right. John Maxwell says that most Christians are educated way beyond their level of obedience. Ouch! But again, the Holy Spirit will always help if He is asked. Don't give up-God hasn't given up on you; don't give up on yourself!

Take heart, the Bible gives us clear and attainable instructions for our identity. Women, in addition to studying the wonderful real women whose portraits are painted through the words of Scripture, study also the beautiful characteristics of the Proverbs 31 woman and read the passages of Titus 2:4-5 to view a biblical perspective of womanhood. Men, study 1 Timothy 4:12-5:2 and Titus 2:6-8 to find some godly definitions of manhood and let the male heroes of faith stir you in your own walk with God.

Remember, the goal is not to be faultless, but rather to be blameless through obedience.

### ***4. Develop "team" thinking.***

Although a single adult may live alone, the clear intention of Scripture is that he or she be a part of a believing community. "The Lord sets the solitary in families" the Psalmist says (Ps. 68:6). Isolation, self-absorption, selfishness with the resources of time, money or talent is never the will of God. In our single adult ministry, we call that "being our own selfish pig."

The Apostle Paul makes it very clear that the primary benefit of singleness is that a single person can be "...more devoted to the Lord in body and in Spirit..." (I Cor. 7:34). In other words, the single person is not distracted by the practical responsibilities of marriage and,

therefore, can use his/her resources to bless the local church, parents, a leadership team, the local community, short/long-term missions projects, and the like.

The single adult who allows the Lord to deal with the human propensity for selfishness will not only be blessed in the "season called single," but will also lay a vital block in his/her character foundation for whatever the Lord has in store.

### ***5. Stop holding the will of God hostage through fear or unbelief.***

Because single adults are often not convinced that God really does have His very best intentions in store for them if they will passionately trust Him, some single adults approach the future with fear or unbelief. They may try to bargain with God. "God, if you bring me a mate, then I'll really, truly serve you."

Fortunately, the Father has not called us to the bargaining table-He's called us to the foot of the cross. We are not negotiators in this game of life-we come to Him through the shed blood of our Savior as servants, disciples and friends-those whose lives are not our own because we've been bought with a price.

Life is truly so brief that we, as single adults, cannot afford to hold the will of God hostage by our unbelief. Rather, we must develop the ability to see life from God's perspective and value highly this "season called single." This season may be brief for some and longer for others-but for each person it is not just a hurdle to cross to get to the real "prize," but rather a vital link to all the "tomorrows" of life.

What is the key to living victoriously in the "season called single"? It is the same key that leads to victorious living in every season of life. It all comes down to right choices based on right thinking.

Choose to take God at His Word. Choose to believe that He has your best in mind. Choose to find value in today for truly there are no guarantees for tomorrow. Choose to be more willing to give than to receive. Those daily choices will lead to sweet fulfillment during the "season called single" and for the years beyond.

### **Suggested Sidebar Content**

#### Four Recommendations for Married Adults

1. View single adults as God does. Recognize that they are already complete in Jesus Christ (Col. 2:10). Their completeness does not depend on being married.
2. Resist being the Holy Spirit—stop teasing, pitying or reprimanding—try praying for God's perfect will in their lives!
3. Include single adults and single parents into your family life as equals, not as projects.
4. Work so hard on your marriage that you become a biblical model for single adults to follow.

### Highly Recommended Resources for Single Adults and Those Who Minister to Them

- DeMoss, Robert Jr., *Sex & The Single Person: Dealing Honestly With the Need for Intimacy*, Zondervan, 1995.
- Elliot, Elizabeth, *Passion and Purity*, Revell, 1984
- Harris, Joshua, *I Kissed Dating Goodbye: A New Attitude Toward Romance and Relationships*, Multnomah Publishers, 1997
- Hsu, Albert, *Singles At the Crossroads: A Fresh Perspective on Christian Singleness*, InterVarsity Press, 1997
- Koons, Carolyn and Anthony, Michael, *Single Adult Passages: Uncharted Territories*, Baker, 1991
- Raunika, Dr. Don, *Choosing God's Best*, Multnomah Publishers, 1998
- Smith, Harold Ivan, *A Singular Devotion: 366 Portraits of Singles Who Have Changed the World*, Revell, 1990