

SINGLE & SERVING GOD

A **MANNAHOUSE** RESOURCE



INTRODUCTION

The Christian single stands in a place of vulnerability and potential frustration. Our society often characterizes the single as a carefree swinger, moving from one adventure to another. The media also provides a constant blitz encouraging the single to go for the gusto and to live a life of experimentation, free from sexual restraint. On the other hand, Christianity rightfully exalts sexual morality and responsibility but frequently pressures the single with the idea that marriage is the only state where an individual can really be complete and fulfilled. This can place the single Christian in a “no win” situation in terms of contentment and self-acceptance. Societal pressures and peers often ridicule their conservative values and life style, while well-meaning Christians pressure them to get married.

It is time for Christian singles to come to terms with their singleness in the light of the scriptures. **The purpose of this booklet is to help singles understand their station in life from a biblical perspective, and to establish proper guidelines for building a proper relationship with a potential mate.**

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GOD HAS YOU SINGLE

There are over forty million people, one out of every three adults in the United States, that are unmarried. This figure includes roughly twenty-two million who have never been married and those who have lost a spouse through death or divorce. This does not include the vast number of single people throughout the world.

You are single, but you are not alone. There is an enormous number of people in this same station in life. As a Christian, you have a distinct advantage. You are not alone in another unique way. You have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ! You do not need to be tossed to and fro, blown about as a leaf in the wind through the influence of social pressures, others' opinions, insecurities, or identity struggles. You have a source of understanding, stability, and strength in God.

The Christian single must relate to their singleness from a biblical perspective. By so doing, you will be like the wise man who built his house upon the rock and was able to resist the onslaught of the rains, the floods, and the winds (Matt. 7:24, 25).

The enemy has some special fiery darts that he uses quite effectively against the single Christian. Once they find their mark, they can have devastating results, either destroying your relationship with God, or crippling your potential for contentment and service. The following are three main areas he works on:

- 1. Conformance to the World** – Singles experience special temptations regarding companionship and sexual needs. Satan works doubly hard on these areas, hoping to bring you to a place which compromises God's standards.
- 2. Failure to Accept Your Singleness Before God** – Satan loves to promote insecurity and agitation in single Christians concerning their condition. Peace comes when we accept our station in life before God. Our Father knows the hairs on our head and every sparrow that falls to the ground, and can be trusted to guide and care for every detail of our lives.
- 3. Marriage Obsession** – It is not wrong to desire marriage. However, if this desire dominates our thoughts to the point where we lose our joy and strips us of spiritual productivity, we are giving Satan an unnecessary advantage.

GOD'S GOAL FOR SINGLES

"For I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content" (Phil. 4:11).

God's goal for every single is that they would enjoy a contentment, fulfillment, and acceptance of their single status and, from this experience, live a life of fruitful and productive service to Him and others.

Attainment of this goal is only possible by coming to a place of genuine trust and submission to God, and through resisting those ideas and attitudes that obstruct this from taking place.

Accepting your singleness requires seeing that your life does, in truth, belong to God (1 Cor. 6:19). He controls every part of your destiny as you release yourself to Him. It also demands resisting the erroneous idea that you can never be truly complete or happy apart from marriage, or that your life will always be in a state of limbo until that time. **Genuine acceptance of your singleness will bring about a personal contentment, along with a release of your own creativity as an individual.**

SPECIAL NEEDS OF SINGLES

The following section provides an examination of some of the special areas of need which Christian singles encounter:

1. IDENTITY IN CHRIST

“For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily; and you are complete in Him” (Col. 2:9, 10).

We live in a time where identity problems are commonplace. Our computerized, fast-paced society, which is filled with changing values and broken homes leaves many struggling with the question, “Who am I?”

A prevalent error among singles is to think that love and marriage is the only solution to this type of problem. This is not true! **We are made for God and will never find security in our true identity apart from Him.**

The single Christian is not waiting to be completed. You are already a whole person in Christ and need only to ground yourself in a relationship with Him to experience stability and completion. **Whether God brings you a marriage partner or not, you are married to Him and must foundationally discover your personal identity in this union (II Cor. 11:2).**

2. COMPANIONSHIP

“A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another” (Jn. 13:34).

One of the major problems faced by singles is that of loneliness. God created each of us with a need for close personal companionship. He made the observation, *“It is not good that man should be alone”* (Gen. 2:18). With Adam, He fulfilled that need through a mate. However, this need for close personal interaction does not necessarily have to be fulfilled through marriage.

Jesus Christ never married but instead demonstrated that, within the purposes of God, singles could enjoy a covenant commitment and a rewarding friendship with each other. A significant fulfillment of this companionship need can be met apart from intimate relationship with the opposite sex.

Singles should receive the admonition to *“love one another”* in a special sense, learning to open their lives to each other. Avoid the tendency to isolate yourself, waiting for the perfect partner to show up. **Meet this companionship need through building close and committed friendships with other brethren.**

3. SEXUAL DESIRES

When God created us male and female, He created us with drives which give us a sexual appetite. **Next to loneliness, the problem of coping with sexual energy is perhaps the most prevailing concern among singles.** This problem is heightened by the sexually stimulating spirit of our age.

In order to maintain a life of purity before God, the single must exercise restraint in the following areas:

- 1. Fornication** - God requires us to abstain from any sexual relationship outside of marriage. We are told to "*flee sexual immorality*" (1 Cor. 6:18), and to "*glorify God in your body*" (1 Cor. 6:20).
- 2. Masturbation** - The Bible is silent on this area and we should not place it on the same level of sexual offense as fornication. However, the single should avoid this practice because of its emphasis on self-stimulation, sexual fantasy and lust, and the resulting outcome of guilt and self-condemnation.
- 3. Impure Thoughts** - We must refuse to entertain impure and immoral thoughts and fantasies. Avoiding literature, influences, and movies which are sexually arousing is a must.

4. RELATING TO THE OPPOSITE SEX

Friendship with members of the opposite sex can be both healthy and rewarding. **Christian singles should work on their capacity to relate to both brothers and sisters in Christ.** There are some definite restrictions, though, that should be exercised:

- 1. Avoid the "Potential Mate" Obsession** - Eliminate the tendency to look at every brother or sister attractive to you as possibly "the one for you". Trust God to bring the right person in His time.
- 2. Don't Flirt** - Flirting involves toying with another's feelings and can be a form of defrauding. Our behavior as Christians must always be based on sincerity and purity.
- 3. Don't Stumble** - Avoid wearing provocative clothing that is revealing or may be sexually stimulating to your brother or sister. Dress modestly with others in mind (1 Tim. 2:9).
- 4. Don't Get Too Close** - Close relationships with members of the opposite sex can cause problems. Singles can be especially vulnerable to the desire for emotional or sexual intimacy. Avoid compromising occasions or situations that may lead to temptation.

5. OVERCOMING TEMPTATION

“God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it” (1 Cor. 10:13).

Even the most committed singles go through seasons of struggle and temptation, wrestling with the enticements of the world and the flesh. Things can be smooth for a period of time, and then it seems like the very forces of hell are unleashed against you. Those who have lived loose and sexually permissive lifestyles prior to their salvation are the most vulnerable.

The key to victory in these seasons is given in James 4:8: “Draw near to God and He will draw near to you.” The more intense the battle becomes, the more fervent must be our seeking of Him and our resolve not to give in. During these times, increased prayer, fellowship, and even fasting can give us the breakthrough that we need. God will make a way of escape as we stand firm, strengthened in His Spirit. The promise to us is to *“Resist the devil and he will flee from you”* (James 4:7).

6. INVOLVEMENT IN SERVICE

“Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord” (1 Cor. 15:58).

Singles have a distinct advantage over marrieds in regard to service to the Lord. Because you are free from the commitments of family life, you have much more time to invest in working for the kingdom of God.

Getting involved in service is a key to fulfillment for the single Christian.

Don't waste your time waiting for your mate to show up. He or she will find you far easier if you're active and involved than if you're sitting alone at home. Realize that you are called with a purpose. God has given you gifts and abilities and the time to use them. Ask God to direct you to a place of service, or approach your pastor for counsel.

Involvement in an area of service brings with it a sense of fruitfulness, creativity, and fulfillment. It also contains the blessing of relationships with others who share the same interest or burden as you.

7. WHAT IF I NEVER MARRY?

This is a fear that runs through the mind of almost every single person. **The thoughts of being alone for the rest of your life and the social stigma of never marrying can be very frightening.** Though chances are that you will marry, there are some vital issues here that should be resolved.

Many singles, especially those who are older, deal with problems of self-esteem. They find themselves wondering, "Is there something wrong with me?" Sometimes there are obvious character or personality problems at fault, but in most cases, this is not the deciding factor. The single who is sincerely yielding to God and open for change can trust that their normal human quirks or idiosyncrasies are not the culprit.

As long as you are not married, your objective is to trust that God has a purpose in your singleness. **Our life in Christ (Col. 3:4), and our contentment and self-esteem must be primarily found in Him.** Remember, the Bible not only implies that we can be content as singles, it actually exalts singleness as a fulfilling and fruitful life situation for those who give themselves wholly to serving God (1 Cor. 7:7,32,40).

CHOOSING A MATE

Next to your commitment to Jesus Christ, your choice of a mate is the most important decision you will ever make. Many have made devastating mistakes in this decision. Their choice was made in the whirlwind of infatuation, based upon physical and emotional attraction alone. Their awakening comes too late and they realize that they should have given it more time and required other qualifications.

The person you marry will influence and affect every aspect of your life. The fires of love must change in time from blind infatuation to a deep and committed realism. The intensity of emotion gives way to a more mature practical appreciation of what it takes to share life's responsibilities on a daily basis.

Because of this, considerations such as your partner's spiritual life, priorities, work habits, relationship with parents, and philosophy of child-rearing must be of paramount importance. **Careful and realistic considerations in the early stages will prevent frustration and heartache later.**

CHOOSING A CHRISTIAN MATE

“Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness?” (II Cor. 6:14).

The Bible is very forceful about the number one qualification for a marriage partner: he or she must be a Christian! We are to marry “ONLY IN THE LORD” (I Cor. 7:39). Those who ignore this mandate and marry an unbeliever face many struggles, compromises, and frustrations later in life. They are unable to enjoy the spiritual unity and fellowship unique to the Christian marriage. Inevitably, differences also emerge concerning the moral and spiritual training of the children.

The following two guidelines are important in choosing a Christian mate:

- 1. Set Your Standards Beforehand** - Christians should establish spiritual and character qualifications for a prospective partner. We should avoid emotional involvement or commitment with those not meeting these standards. We should likewise never date an unbeliever.
- 2. Trust in God’s Guidance** - As Rebekah was brought to Isaac through divine guidance (Genesis 24), so we can also trust the Lord to bring us the right person in His timing.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

Wise selection of a mate requires the consideration of other necessary conditions. Following are a list of some of the more important of these:

- 1. Spiritual Compatibility** - Both people being Christians does not guarantee compatibility. There are other questions to consider. Are you comfortable together in prayer? Do you agree on important areas of doctrine? Do you have complimentary goals in serving God? If both individuals can say "yes" to the above questions, there will likely be a strong spiritual dimension in the relationship.
- 2. Similar Backgrounds** - As a general rule, marriages have a greater chance for stability and success when both partners are similar in such variables as age, interests, values, socio-economic level, and education.
- 3. Complimentary Needs** - Two people have a greater opportunity for fulfillment when they share complimentary needs. For example, if both enjoy social contacts, even though one may be more shy than the other, they share complimentary needs. If, however, one loves mixing with people and the other is reclusive, their needs are not complimentary.

4. Emotional Attraction - Choosing a mate on the basis of feelings alone is unwise, but ignoring the need for emotional attraction would also be a mistake. Someone can have all the right qualifications but without the spark of emotional magnetism, he or she is probably not for you.

5. Physical Attraction - Physical attraction should never be the main qualification in a partner. However, it is important that your prospective mate at least be physically acceptable to you.

6. Mental and Emotional Maturity - A successful relationship requires maturity. Maturity is witnessed by a number of factors such as a capacity to accept responsibility, self control, the ability to be objective with problems, acting your age, being sensitive to others, a responsible attitude toward money, a healthy attitude toward sex, an ability to make decisions, etc. The maturity factor of a prospective mate deserves careful consideration.

PRINCIPLES OF BUILDING A RELATIONSHIP

Most singles, by the time they are saved, have been fully indoctrinated into a worldly pattern of relating to the opposite sex. Many have spent years of practicing a lifestyle of loose morals and sexual permissiveness. Now as a Christian, you must be “*transformed by the renewing of your mind*” (Rom. 12:2).

The principles of building a relationship in the kingdom of God are different from that of the world. The worldly pattern is built on the premise of receiving selfish pleasure and immediate gratification. **The kingdom pattern works toward building a lasting relationship that will bring glory to God and fulfillment to those involved in it.** It builds slowly and carefully, constantly testing the divine will, and allows God to give it shape and confirm its direction. **The Christian relationship must avoid being controlled by the elements of emotion, sexual desire, or premature commitment.** Instead, it should follow the guidelines given on the following pages.

1. AVOID THE DATING GAME

Christians must free themselves from the idea that frequent dating should be the normal lifestyle of a single person. It is safer and far more edifying to mix within groups of singles, than alone with the opposite sex. The Christian single is looking for God's choice in a mate, and trusting Him to bring the right person in His time. **Dating is not wrong if it is done God's way with the right person. The following are some guidelines:**

- 1. Set Your Standards** - Don't get involved with anyone who is not fully committed to Christ.
- 2. Relate Before You Date** - Really get to know a person through group fellowship and personal interaction before you do something alone together. Don't date without a sincere interest and attraction.
- 3. Avoid Vulnerable Situations** - Stay in public places and away from situations that may lead to sexual temptation.
- 4. Do Edifying Things** - Hiking, biking, picnics, dining out, etc. Give opportunity for fellowship and getting to know one another.

2. BUILD A STRONG FOUNDATION

Just as Jesus Christ is the chief cornerstone of the church (1 Pet. 2:6), He must also be the foundation for every developing relationship. A soulish foundation is built merely on feelings. Though love is the power behind a growing relationship, the Christian must insure that the following stones are part of the initial foundation.

1. Sense of God's Witness - There must be a "spiritual witness" about the relationship before any serious commitments are made.

2. Spiritual Compatibility - A strong spiritual foundation is laid by fellowship around spiritual things (i.e., praying together and reading the Word). There should also emerge a similar spiritual perspective and a shared vision for service.

3. Develop as Friends - Hot and heavy romances inevitably burn out! The ones that last have a strong friendship base where the two people share interests and enjoy the other's company in a variety of life's experiences.

3. COMING UNDER COUNSEL

“Obey those who rule over you, and be submissive, for they watch out for your souls, as those who must give account” (Heb. 13:17).

Once a relationship reaches a level of serious commitment, a couple should go to their spiritual oversight, i.e., pastors or elders, and communicate what is taking place with them. Leaders are set in the body to guide the church and to “watch . . . for your souls” (Heb. 13:17).

Seek their counsel regarding your relationship and any cautions or concerns that they may have. Because of their position and maturity, they may have some unique insights that can benefit the growth of your relationship. Marriage counsel is a vital part of preparation for marriage. As the date draws near, arrange for marriage counseling with your pastor or someone he may appoint.

A couple must avoid the impulse to get married as soon as they make a commitment to each other. **A sufficient amount of time must be given to the courtship stage in order to develop a realistic understanding and knowledge of each other.**

4. WHAT ABOUT PETTING

“For I have betrothed you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ” (II Cor. 11:2).

As two people grow together in their commitment and begin to spend more time with each other, there is an ever present temptation for greater physical involvement. An affectionate kiss or holding each other’s hand is no longer enough.

The above scripture gives us an important principle to honor in this aspect of a relationship. The word “chaste” means “clean or innocent”. Paul desired to present the church to Christ free from all moral defilement. All sexual involvement including petting, apart from marriage, is inconsistent with this principle. **Courtship is a time for relating spiritually, mentally, and emotionally. The pleasures and privilege of sexual involvement come after marriage.** Petting, apart from marriage, is a form of defrauding in that there is sexual arousal without the allowance of fulfillment. It is also toying with temptation. Too often, the best intentioned couple goes too far and then must cope with guilt and condemnation. Though there is grace and forgiveness, keeping God’s standards is the real goal.

CONCLUSION

The Christian single is in a unique position to live a life of productive and fruitful service unto the Lord. The only obstacle to this is coming to a place of contentment and trust in God regarding your station in life.

The years of your singleness are a divinely ordained time meant to be used constructively and with purpose in God. Those should be years dedicated to spiritual growth, involvement in church life, and preparation toward career betterment.

The individual that uses this time in his or her life for these purposes becomes a wise steward and will look back with satisfaction upon their decisions. They will be like the profitable servant who invested the talents given to him, who later received the Lord's commendation, "*Well done, good and faithful servant . . . Enter into the joy of your Lord*" (Matt. 25:21).

For a brief summary of the main points of this booklet, read the boldly printed words on each page. We also recommend reading the Mannahouse counseling booklet entitled, "What the Bible Says About Sex".



CAMPUS LOCATIONS

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**SCAN FOR SUNDAY
SERVICE TIMES**

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