

■ Book Review

REVIEWED BY VALERIE J. NYSTROM

Unmarried But Not Unimportant

Intended for single women and the churches they attend, *Single Women: Challenge to the Church?* tackles the unique challenges faced by single Christian women through the eyes of nearly 100 women who were surveyed and interviewed for the project.

The book also addresses the church's response to these challenges and provides practical suggestions for the church on how to serve its single members. This work is an encouragement for single women because it views singleness as a gift that holds a distinct purpose for a woman's service to God.

The first four chapters of the book: "Society," "Church," "Husband-hunting?" and "Attitudes," outline the circumstances of single women, with the first chapter containing an abundance of statistics pertaining to single life.

The next three chapters contain an extensive use of quotes from the women interviewed, and although Aune comments on the women's thoughts and experiences, she offers no real assistance in either dealing with or embracing singleness. These chapters can, however, help the church gain insight into what single women encounter and provide singles with a true sense that they are not alone in their experience.

The true merit of the book is ultimately found in its final two chapters, "Theology" and "Recommendations." In her treatment of the theology of singleness, Aune looks at both the Old and the New Testaments, but deals primarily with the New Testament as it contains most of the biblical references to singleness. This chapter discusses the importance of singles in Jesus' ministry and the treatment and freedom he offered single believers, especially women. It also points out that Paul viewed singleness

as a great gift of God, even recommending in his letter to Corinth that people should remain single in order to focus on their relationship with Christ.

The present church oftentimes fails to recognize singleness as a gift and readily treats all singleness

merely as "a period of waiting for a partner," Aune notes. The 10 recommendations in the final chapter offer a corrective to the common misinterpretation of singleness. For instance, in her third recommendation Aune states, "Let [single

women] use their wide range of gifts to serve God and the church. Do not simply expect them to take on the jobs no one else wants. Do not discriminate on the basis of marital status."

Single Women: Challenge to the Church? truly portrays singleness in a positive light, pointing out that the only marriage any Christian woman really needs is her marriage to Christ. "If we take up the challenge of recognizing singleness as a gift, the Christian media will no longer have to focus their

discussions on the dilemma posed by single women," writes Aune. "There will be no dilemma, just women and men, single and married, living their lives in the service of the gospel."

Single Women: Challenge to the Church?

By Kristin Aune

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