

Autumn 2014

Mutuality

the voice of Christians for Biblical Equality

SINGLENESS

Family, identity, and service
beyond marriage

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"Let us then pursue what makes for peace and for mutual upbuilding" (Rom. 14:19, NRSV).

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A Celebration of Singleness

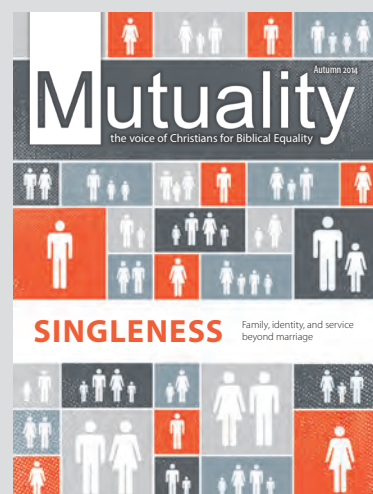
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A Single Purpose

I would like you to be free from concern. An unmarried man is concerned about the Lord's affairs—how he can please the Lord. But a married man is concerned about the affairs of this world—how he can please his wife—and his interests are divided. An unmarried woman or virgin is concerned about the Lord's affairs: Her aim is to be devoted to the Lord in both body and spirit. But a married woman is concerned about the affairs of this world—how she can please her husband. I am saying this for your own good, not to restrict you, but that you may live in a right way in undivided devotion to the Lord. (1 Cor. 7:32–35)

How different these words are from what I am used to hearing! I live in an American evangelical subculture whose attitude couldn't be further from Paul's. Paul laments that the demands of family distract from serving the Lord; we teach that service to the Lord and the demands of family are one and the same. To us, marriage can't distract from our calling, because marriage *is* our calling. And it seems to be the one calling we believe (almost) all Christians should pursue. Of course, we recognize that not everyone gets married, but we wish they could.

I've heard Paul's words often, but usually only as a source of comfort. These are words I used to repeat to myself in hopes that I'd one day believe them. We turn to this passage to comfort a friend coming to terms with their unmarried state. And we should use these words to comfort; they are comforting and true. But they should be more to us than comfort. Giving God our undivided devotion should not be a consolation prize.

For too long, we've embraced the myth that marriage is the ultimate form of the Christian life. We've pieced together enough Bible verses to make our historic, patriarchal family structures into a biblical mandate for all people. Men are created to provide and lead, and this is the essence of "biblical manhood." Women act out "biblical womanhood" when they embrace their God-given design as mothers, and when they submit to and support the leadership of a husband. It is in these roles that we are fulfilled as humans, and it is in these roles that we live out God's ideal for human relationships.

But Paul's words form the basis of different vision. We are created not for marriage but for service to God. Devotion to God is where we find our fulfillment. The ideal for human relationships? Women and men—married or not—empowering one another to serve according to God's call.

I was raised in a community of missionaries, and the pillars of our community were single women—women like Aunt Viv and Aunt Lil. As young, single women, they settled thousands of miles from home, and there they served together for the

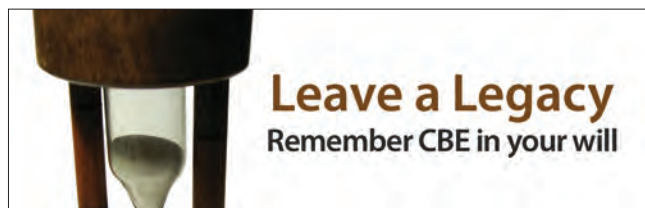
next several decades. They learned the local languages, taught people about Jesus, and translated the Bible. In the world of missions, where families are often transitory, these women were not. Because they were single, they were uniquely positioned to dedicate their lives to service.

I imagine they and others longed at various times for marriage and children (in fact, Aunt Viv did marry at the age of seventy-five), but those desires didn't define them. They never met all the criteria for "biblical womanhood;" they were too busy being Jesus' hands and feet.

Paul's words in 1 Corinthians 7 should provide not only comfort, but also inspiration. We should teach them to children and adults alike, and we should encourage our children to aspire to be like Aunt Viv and Aunt Lil. We should praise singleness as a worthy and admirable path. And we should embrace the unmarried believers in our midst, empowering them to serve and affirming their identities.

This issue of *Mutuality* explores singleness from an egalitarian perspective. We analyze our obsession with marriage, we rethink Christian identity and cross-gender friendship, and we hear the voices of single adults. Let us take their wisdom to heart, and together become a church known not for its obsession with marriage or gender roles, but for its single-minded devotion to the Lord.

In Christ,
Tim Krueger





THE (SINGLE) CHRISTIAN LIFE

*So, no one told you life was gonna be this way
Your job's a joke, you're broke, your love life's D.O.A.
It's like you're always stuck in second gear
When it hasn't been your day, your week, your month, or even your year
I'll be there for you, when the rain starts to pour
I'll be there for you, like I've been there before
I'll be there for you
Cause you're there for me too*

By Kate Wallace

My roommate and I like to watch the TV show *Friends*. Correction—my roommate and I are *addicted* to the TV show *Friends*. All throughout college, our group of girlfriends had this show on loop. It was on in the background when we were doing homework, or studying for tests, or eating dinner, or getting ready for the day. It became a bonding experience, a shared moment.

After college, my roommate and I both struggled to find employment and had to navigate the move-back-in-with-your-parents, maybe-I'll-go-back-to-school, “are you even looking for a job?” economy. I am blessed to live with this

dear friend now, especially because we are the only two women from our college group who are not married or in a long-term relationship. While our friends are registering for home furnishings, talking about having kids, and going on honeymoons, we are spending our whole paychecks on furniture from Ikea, making late-night frozen yogurt runs, and traversing the landscape of dating in our mid-twenties.

Although we enjoyed *Friends* in college, we hadn't lived it. Now, we're around the same age as the characters. We can relate to them with their eccentric neighbors, their struggles to find the right job, the mistakes they make at work, and their catastrophic

dates. We even spend way too much time at our favorite coffee shop and fight about stupid things like where the ottoman should go and how to decorate the apartment (If only our walls were purple!). While our beloved friends are learning to live life with their husbands, we are learning to live life as roommates.

It is an interesting spot to be in when you throw in the fact that, unlike the characters on *Friends*, we are Christians. We don't have one-night stands or plan to live with boyfriends before marriage. *Friends* doesn't provide an example of how single *Christians* should live together in community. The problem, though, is that the church doesn't either.

Most of the relationship advice from church is geared toward people who are married. Sermons about Christian relationships are mostly about how to be a better wife or husband, how to love your spouse through hard situations, or how to honor God in raising your kids. I have heard many pastors say, “There is no better place to learn forgiveness than in marriage,” and “You will never know how God loves his children until you have a child of your own.” Marriage and children are blessings, to be sure. And there is wisdom in those words, but what are they communicating to single Christians? We, too, would like to learn forgiveness in the context of our relationships. Can those of us without children not know the love God has for us? Do we have to be married to experience the fullness of the Christian faith?

Why are we so obsessed with marriage?

Over the last few years, as I moved from church to church as a single woman in my twenties, I realized that the idolization of marriage was more prominent in churches that taught the complementarian message of “biblical manhood and biblical womanhood” (whether they officially held that theology or not).

And it makes sense: A movement that, according to its flagship organization, the Council on Biblical Manhood and Womanhood, is based on the idea that “distinctions in masculine and feminine roles are ordained by God as part of the created order...” and that these roles include “Adam’s headship in marriage” would naturally see marriage as the best way for women to live out the Christian life. After all, if God designed the man to be in charge in marriage and the church, what better way to solidify the woman’s supporting role than to idolize marriage and child-rearing?

As a result, marriage is seen as a goal to be achieved, an ideal way to live the Christian life. This has become a prominent theme of evangelical culture. Whole organizations, Sunday school curriculums, sermon series, conferences, and Christian books focus exclusively on marriage, leaving singles to wonder how they fit in.

You see, complementarians *have* to idolize marriage because true “biblical womanhood” cannot be fully achieved outside of it. If they don’t hold up marriage as an ideal, what are they going to do with all their women?

What is said to single Christians is usually meant *to prepare them for marriage*, which only reinforces the problem. I have never heard a pastor in a church give a sermon where the illustration was about single Christians living together and learning how to honor Christ in their friendship and their shared life.

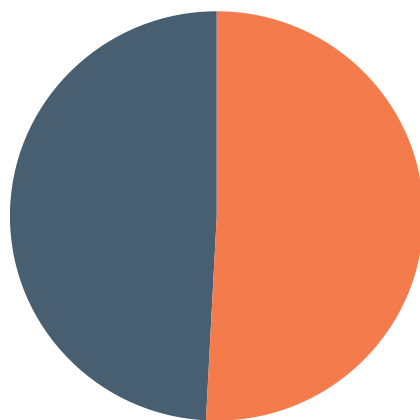
This is a travesty when we consider that, according to Pew Research, the median age that an American of my generation marries for the first time is twenty-seven. That means many of us will not get married until we’re a decade into adulthood. That leaves a decade of living with roommates, a decade of life experience missing from church teaching,

and, therefore, a decade of learning from pop culture instead of the church.

And that only takes into account those in their twenties who are single and never married. The “single population” is actually much larger than most people think. According to the same study, 49% of adult Americans are unmarried. But, according to Barna, unmarried adults make up only about one-third of adults who attend church. Singles aren’t going to church. The church needs to reach out to single people. But how?

Better theology, better practices

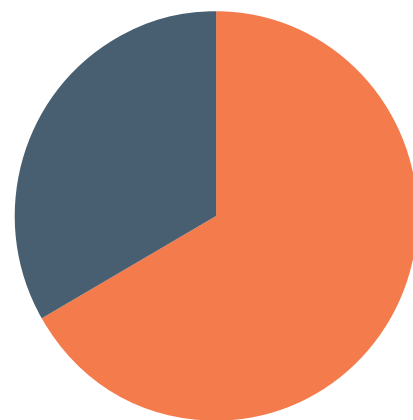
A key way we can embrace singles is to embrace egalitarian theology, which offers churches a unique advantage



49%

of all American adults
are unmarried

Pew Research, “Barely Half of U.S. Adults Are Married – A Record Low,” 2011.

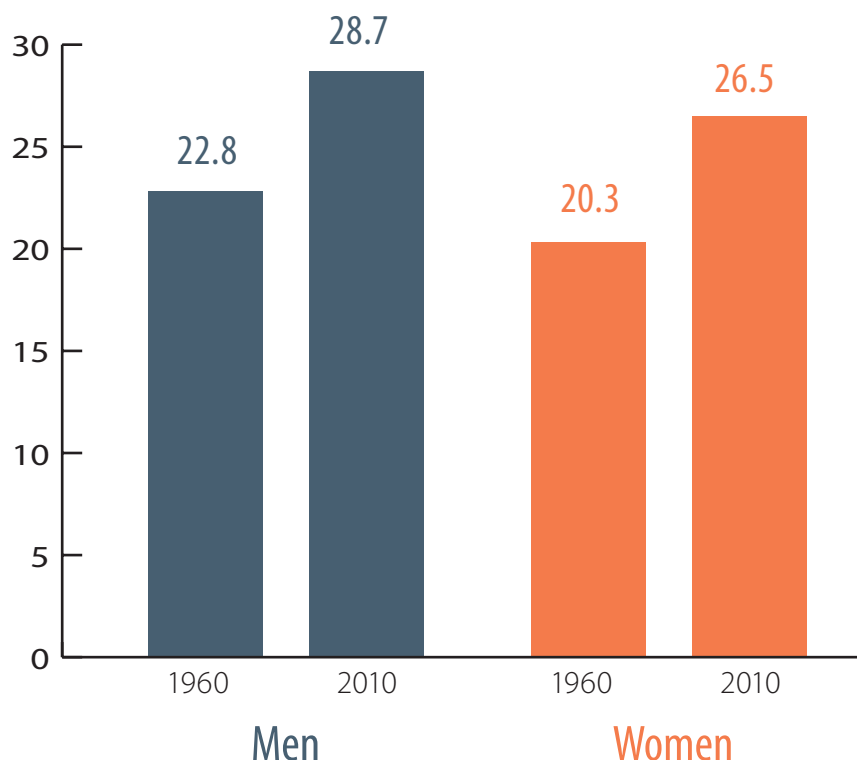


1/3

of adults who attend church
are unmarried

Barna Group, “Who Is Active in ‘Group’ Expressions of Faith? Barna Study Examines Small Groups, Sunday School, and House Churches,” 2010.

Median age at first marriage, 1960 vs. 2010



Pew Research, “Barely Half of U.S. Adults Are Married – A Record Low,” 2011.

when it comes to reaching singles. You see, complementarians *have* to idolize marriage because true “biblical womanhood” cannot be fully achieved outside of it. If they don’t hold up marriage as an ideal, what are they going to do with all their women?

Egalitarians don’t face the same limitation. The effectiveness of our theology does not depend on how prominently we preach about marriage, because we believe that both men and women can lead and serve outside of marriage. Women do not *need* to be married with kids in order to live a full Christian life, so the domestic realm becomes *one of many* options for women. This leaves room for both men and women to remain single and still fill an important role in the Christian community.

Despite this, the quantity and prominence of complementarian resources over the last forty years has caused many egalitarian churches (including mine) to

adopt marriage-centric language and practices. So, how do egalitarian churches break free from this influence and become more inclusive to single people? Here are five suggestions:

1. Stop talking about singleness as a “pre-married” state, and instead treat it as a legitimate way of life.

Understand what the single life looks like and reach people where they are—with their roommates and friends, in their dating lives, and in building God-honoring community outside the nuclear family. Preach about the friendships found in Scripture: about Paul and Silas; Mary and Elizabeth; or Jesus, Mary, and Martha. As singles, we share lives with people who are significant to us, even if we don’t make up a traditional family.

2. Rethink the language used in sermons.

Instead of teaching that the *best* place to learn forgiveness is in marriage and the

best way to learn about the love of God is to have kids, how about giving a few different examples of how forgiveness and love can be learned and experienced in Christian life? I realize that many pastors are simply talking out of their experience, but wouldn’t it be great if our sermons spoke to the lives of *everyone* in our congregations, not just those whose lives are like the pastor’s?

Rethinking the language we use might just help us be more truthful in our teaching as well. Think about it: by saying that we must be married in order to understand some of the greatest Christian teachings, we are saying that a plethora of unmarried Christians and biblical figures never understood these things—people like Mother Theresa, Thomas Aquinas, the apostle Paul, and even Jesus. Do we really think that they never knew the fullness of God’s love or learned true forgiveness?

3. Don’t make marriage and childrearing goals to be met or callings to be fulfilled.

When we treat marriage as an achievement or a sign of spiritual maturity, we devalue the lives of singles in our communities and ignore scriptural teaching that encourages the single life. Scripture describes marriage and singleness as “gifts” (1 Cor. 7:7)—not callings, not identities, and not promises. I think the church could benefit from using this language to describe marriage and singleness. Both of these gifts have advantages and disadvantages, blessings and hardships, and both can bring glory to the kingdom of God.

4. Remember that singles don’t all look alike.

Some of us are in our twenties and some of us are a few decades older than that. Some of us are sincerely hoping to get married someday, and some of us aren’t so sure about it. Some of us plan on having a traditional family, and some of us are dreaming up unconventional ways of living in community. Some of us are single and never married, and some of us are divorced or widowed. Singles don’t fit into one demographic. We bring many different gifts, life lessons, and perspectives to the table. Which leads me to my last point...

Egalitarian theology can better equip churches to reach out to single people, but until it is practically implemented into everyday church practices, singles will continue to feel out of place in the church.

5. Stop using marriage as an entry ticket into various church activities.

When Bible study groups, Sunday services, and church outings are segregated based on whether you are married or single, singles groups start to feel like a temporary community or a holding pattern for future church engagement. With this setup, one's community in church is dependent upon marital status, instead of gifting or calling. This can be especially difficult for single parents and

those who have gone through divorce. Let's be more creative with our ministries so that singles, instead of all being relegated to one particular ministry, can be incorporated in every aspect of church life, and for that matter, church leadership—your church needs their gifts and will be better for it.

The church can be a difficult environment for single people to navigate. Theologies that emphasize Christian fulfillment through marriage and parenting have caused marriage and the nuclear family to be so elevated that many singles feel like there is no place for them in Christian community. Egalitarian theology can better equip churches to reach out to single people, but until it is practically implemented into everyday church practices, singles will continue to feel out of place in the church.

And while the church is largely ignoring singles, pop culture is not. In fact, the world outside our church doors can be a much friendlier place for single people than the one within them. Which

is why, when my roommate and I are tired of trying to carve out a small place for ourselves in Christian community, when we need direction in certain aspects of our lives, when we yearn for something to relate to in our singleness, we turn not to our churches, but to our favorite TV show.

Still, we are determined to stay connected to a church. We can see change on the horizon. A groundswell of support is growing for egalitarian theology, and as its influence grows, narrow definitions of manhood and womanhood will fade. When they do, singles will discover a new kind of church—one that embraces and affirms them as they are.



Kate Wallace is a co-founder of The Junia Project, operations manager for the Wesleyan Holiness Consortium, coordinator for the WHC Freedom Network, and an adjunct professor in political science. She is a committed Christian and millennial feminist who enjoys writing and speaking on the intersection of politics, religion, and gender. She holds a Master of Science from the London School of Economics and a Bachelor of Arts from Azusa Pacific University.

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SINGLE AND MARRIED

by Vicki Scheib

When I was asked to lead a single adult ministry in my church, my response was a quick and emphatic “No!” As a thirty-something woman wrestling with my own singleness, how could I muster the strength and wisdom to minister to those on a similar journey? Working with single adults would only highlight my own personal angst as my season of singleness extended longer than I anticipated.

Eventually, my “no” became a “yes.” I was hired as the director of single adult ministries at a large, nondenominational church. Over time, the ministry grew from a handful of people to hundreds of single adults in various stages and seasons of life. There were young adults and widows, divorcees, and those who were never married. There were Bible studies, support groups, car care ministries, and service projects. We loved on single parents and their children, and we cared for those with broken hearts and dismantled hopes. Although there were challenges and struggles, bit-by-bit we learned how to love one another.

However, over time, I experienced a gnawing dissatisfaction with my work. While the single adult ministry met the needs of single adults, it unintentionally solidified an existing problem: adults in the church are predominantly identified by their marital status. While my work was valuable and important, it seemed to support and enlarge the divide between single and married.

BRIDGING THE IDENTITY DIVIDE

THE DIVIDE

In today’s evangelical churches, a person’s identity is often shaped by their marital status. Marriage gives stability and honor to the social structures of the church and provides the context in which gender-defined roles can be fulfilled. Marriage is embraced as the ultimate adult relationship, so singleness becomes a status to be overcome. The elevation of marriage over singleness can make single people feel lonely, ostracized, and misunderstood.

The belief that singleness is a problem is revealed by the questions single people are sometimes asked. “Why are you still single?” or “What’s wrong that you’re not married?” or comments such as, “You must be picky” or “You must have issues.” These comments and questions reveal the assumption that any healthy adult should either

currently, or eventually be married. If not, something needs to be fixed. The questions also reveal a hierarchy between married and single adults, creating a divide within our churches.

In order to narrow the divide that develops when our adult identity is categorized by being married or single, we need a theological framework that does not segregate adults by their marital status and gender-defined roles. We need a common identity rooted in the biblical, gender-mutual image of family and friendship rather than in our marital status.

JESUS AND IDENTITY

Jesus rarely used marriage to describe the adult community in which he lived and ministered. In fact, Jesus seldom spoke of marriage in his teaching. Instead, when given the opportunity to describe relationships in the kingdom of God, he used terms that did not create hierarchy or separate individuals into the socially-categorized “have or have nots.” Instead, he used examples of mutuality and equality. Jesus called women and men sisters and brothers; they were his family and friends.

IDENTITY AS FAMILY

Jesus first used familial terminology with his followers when responding to his mother and brothers in Matthew 12. When someone told Jesus that his family was waiting for him, Jesus responded with the question, “Who is my mother and who are my brothers?” (Matt. 12:48 NRSV). “Whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother” (Matt. 12:50 NRSV). Jesus named his followers as brothers and sisters,

giving them equal access to relationship with him and shared, mutual relationships with one another. Biology is not the only unifying factor of those who are family. Jesus creates a whole new understanding of family, identifying us as brothers and sisters in the family of God.

Because women and men in the body of Christ are family, we need to consider how we relate to one another. Seeing one another as sister or brother removes the tendency to objectify others by their marital status. We are no longer those who are “marriage material” or those “off the market,” those who are the recipients of another’s romantic interest and those who are not. Instead, we are sisters and brothers who choose to love and serve one another.

It is our relationship as sister and brother, not the marriage relationship, which is the eternal relationship construct. Jesus said “in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven” (Matt. 22:30 NRSV). Embracing one another as family does not undermine the value of marriage but instead undergirds it with a narrative that goes beyond romantic interest. Whether married or single, we are sisters and brothers to each other, affirming the mutuality of our relationships with one another.

IDENTITY AS FRIENDS

Jesus also changed the relationship paradigm between himself and his followers when he called us his friends. He transcended hierarchical barriers and even familial alignments, inviting both women and men into a relationship with him and care for one another not based on power, status, or gender, but love. Jesus not only washed his disciples’ feet, demonstrating how a leader serves, but he also identified himself as their friend. What do friends do? They lay down their lives for one another. “No one has greater love than this, to lay down one’s life for one’s friends” (John 15:13 NRSV).

Paul later affirms Jesus’ paradigm shift when he instructs husbands to love their wives in Ephesians 5. No longer is marriage described as a hierarchical and unequal

relationship. Instead, Paul’s instruction for mutual submission (Eph. 5:21), and for husbands to “love their wives as Christ loves the church” (Eph. 5:25 NRSV), align his teaching with the paradigm shift that Jesus offered his followers. Mutuality and love, the essence of friendship, become the foundation of all relationships, whether married or single.

Friendship is central to all Christian relationships. As women and men who follow Jesus, we are asked to regard one another as better than ourselves (Phil. 2:3). As a community of individuals, we are to adopt a posture of humility toward one another and consider what it would be like to walk in another person’s shoes, or

Embracing one another as family does not undermine the value of marriage but instead undergirds it with a narrative that goes beyond romantic interest. Whether married or single, we are sisters and brothers to each other, affirming the mutuality of our relationships with one another.

“not look to your own interests but to the interests of others” (Phil. 2:4 NRSV). In doing so, we allow ourselves to be known in community, minimizing barriers and increasing mutual care.

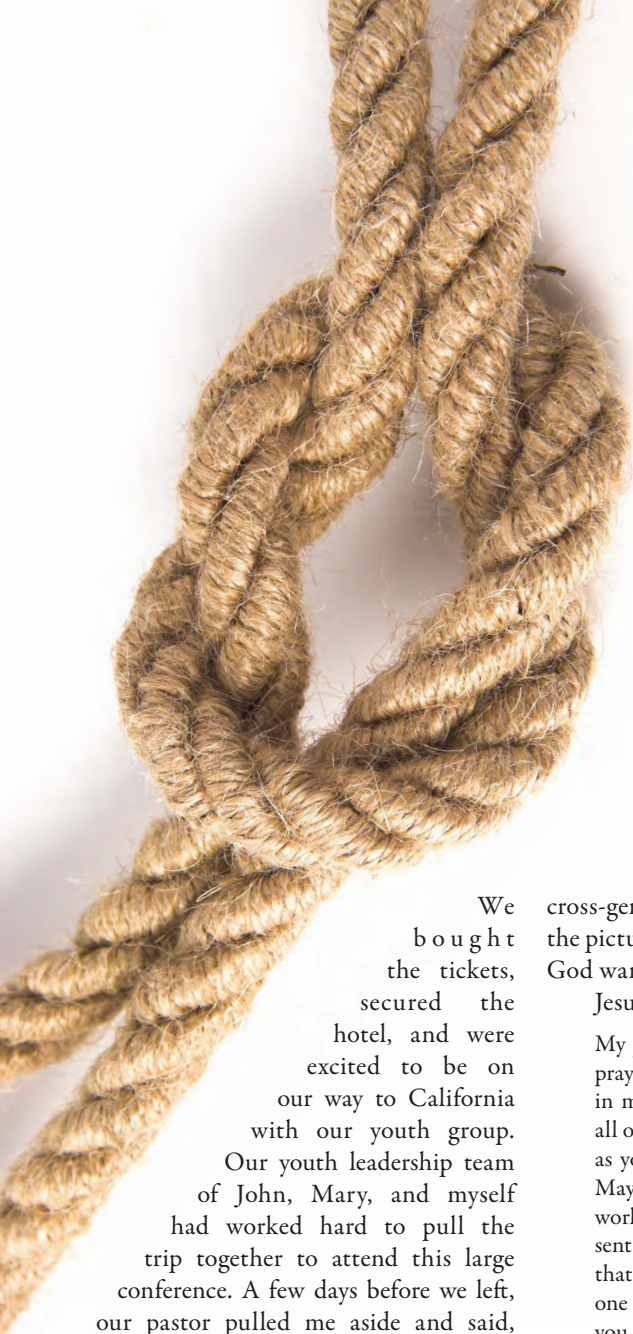
By living from our common, mutual identity as family and friends, we

minimize the tendency to prioritize one marital status over another. We diminish the tendency to idolize marriage over singleness or to see singleness as a romanticized alternative to the challenges of marriage. Taking the focus off one’s marital status requires that we get to know one another as equals, no matter our gender, gifts, or marital status, and requires that we seek to understand one another and not try to “fix.” We also shift the focus from gender-defined roles to relationships defined by our mutual care for one another. By doing so, we create the kind of community where all are welcome and all belong.

While I’m no longer the director of a single adult ministry, I look back and realize that as a ministry, we had a lot to offer the church. Because none of us were married, we learned to be family to one another and we prioritized relating to one another as friends over making romantic connections. Our relationships were mutual and equal as we strived to treat one another as brothers and sisters in Christ. In retrospect, we modeled the kind of community that God wants the church to deeply consider: a community of women and men who give precedence to their relationships as sisters and brothers in the family of God and not gender-defined roles that can only be fulfilled in marriage. Single adults have much to offer those who are married. And, married adults have much to offer those who are single. By shifting our theological framework to our common, mutual identity as family and friends, we create equality among all adults, and enhance our unity in the body of Christ.



Vicki Scheib, DMin, received her Doctor of Ministry in leadership and spiritual formation from George Fox Evangelical Seminary in Portland, OR. Her dissertation and ongoing research is focused on the spiritual formation and identity formation of men and women leaders. She is a founding member of Communitas, a spiritual formation collective based in Bozeman, MT, and a spiritual director for seminary students at George Fox Evangelical Seminary. She is single and lives in York, PA.



That They May Be one

by Katie Driver

We bought the tickets, secured the hotel, and were excited to be on our way to California with our youth group. Our youth leadership team of John, Mary, and myself had worked hard to pull the trip together to attend this large conference. A few days before we left, our pastor pulled me aside and said, “Katie, I don’t think you should go. You’re a married woman, and with John going, well, something could happen. It’s not a good situation.”

I was taken aback. “You’re kidding me, right? John is a friend, a real brother to me. What would make you say this? Has there been something to give you the impression of anything more than a brotherly relationship between us?”

“No,” he replied, “It’s just that it’s a temptation, you know.”

To him and to a lot of people, close cross-gender friendship isn’t worth it; the risk is too great. As a result, marriage becomes the only means for intimate

cross-gender friendship. But this isn’t the picture of Christian community that God wants.

Jesus prayed in John 17:20–23:

My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one—I in them and you in me—so that they may be brought to complete unity. Then the world will know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.

What can produce the kind of unity that Jesus prayed for? Is it something spiritually abstract, mysterious, and

unattainable? Is this oneness possible only within marriage? Is it limited to same-gender groups lest it be corrupted by sexual temptation, or is oneness possible across gender lines?

I believe that for the body of Christ to achieve the oneness of purpose that Jesus prayed for in John 17, we need rich and significant relationships that are not segregated by gender or marital status.

Jesus gives his followers the opportunity to share true intimacy, not only with the Godhead, but also with each other through a shared commitment to him. Jesus wants oneness for all believers who make up the body of Christ. What should this look like?

Scripture describes relationships within the body of Christ with words like “brother,” “sister,” “mother,” “father,” “son,” and “daughter.” We often use these words superficially, but we should

For the body of Christ to achieve the oneness of purpose that Jesus prayed for in John 17, we need rich and significant relationships that are not segregated by gender or marital status.

try to live out their true essence in our Christian communities. A church should resemble a healthy family, in which all relationships—regardless of gender or marital status—are deeply valued.

MY STORY

Growing up I was what you would call both a tomboy and a “girly girl.” One day I’d be out building forts, playing army, baseball, or hunting the fields and ponds for snakes, frogs, and salamanders with the neighborhood boys. The next day I’d pull out my dolls, maybe have a tea party, or play dress-up with the girls. I was completely comfortable in both worlds, and was best friends with both girls and boys. I also had unique and powerful relationships with my father and uncles, who encouraged important parts of my personality and taught me powerful lessons about life. My freedom to have male and female friends and role models strengthened and encouraged me as I grew up.

When I reached early adulthood, I began to feel pressure from well-meaning Christians, both male and female, not to have close friendships with men because they weren’t safe or healthy for me as a Christian woman. I was told they were simply “too risky,” and may give the impression of impropriety. I was advised to limit my relationships with men other than my husband and instead to find fulfillment in the traditional roles of wife and mother.

I optimistically attended women’s retreats hoping to find some encouragement and support for my life and ministry. Sadly, I left these events with neither encouragement nor support in anything other than my roles as wife and mother. The craft projects and the manicures were intended for fun and were supposed to affirm my womanhood, but they left me longing for something with spiritual depth. Like many who attended these events, I was a wife, mother, and even homeschooled my children, but I needed relationships that affirmed me in more than these roles.

Often, I have found this affirmation in my friendships with men (not that

When we embrace relationships across divisions of gender or marital status, we more fully experience the oneness Jesus wants for his followers.

women can’t or don’t also provide this—just that I had to go outside the stereotypical “women’s events”). Single and married men, younger and older, encouraged and supported me in non-traditional roles. I found conversations and interests that went beyond children, family, and the walls of my home and stretched further out into the world, to the lost, and to the overall mission and purpose of the body of Christ.

In my experience, when we limit relationships to the same gender or make our fellowship marriage-focused, we limit our community and ourselves. When we embrace relationships across divisions of gender or marital status, we more fully experience the oneness Jesus wants for his followers.

WHAT ABOUT TEMPTATION?

But what about temptation? I used to be part of a denomination whose leader told the male leaders under him to “make sure they hire an old and unattractive woman” to be their secretary (to avoid the supposedly inevitable sexual temptation that would result from a man working closely with an attractive woman).

There is Scripture to support the practice of running from sin and its temptation, and we do need to be wise—certainly sexual sin, manipulation, and abuse have taken place. People often say to avoid the issue altogether and spare ourselves the struggle. But when we avoid the issue, are we really walking in freedom and maturity?

To segregate our fellowship by gender in order to control the flesh is to say that we don’t believe God’s power is sufficient to overcome our weaknesses. It is the Christian version of the burqa worn by some Muslim women to hide their bodies so as not to tempt men.

But this strategy keeps us from maturing and experiencing the power of Christ to overcome our weakness. We will also miss out on the richness that can come from cross-gender relationships. We will be spiritually stunted as individuals and as the body of Christ.

A NEW RELATIONSHIP PARADIGM

I believe in order to have the kind of unity Christ prayed for we need a whole new paradigm of understanding Christian fellowship and relationship. We need relationships as deep and abiding as those that Jesus had with the women around him, or those that the apostle Paul had with the co-workers he references with deep affection in his letters. We need to consider each other family.

Like those between a brother and sister, cross-gender relationships should not be based on fear, but on trust, honesty, and the true agenda of preferring one another above ourselves. We shouldn’t be suspicious, but should encourage maturity and wisdom when navigating these relationships.

Jesus enables and calls us to enter into relationships with all, regardless of gender, marital status, class, ethnicity, or any other division. These relationships highlight the fullness of Christ in each of us, and together we function as a healthy family that reflects our loving God.



Katie Driver is an experienced missionary, church planter, leadership trainer, and catalyst for the organic church movement. She also is an international speaker and trainer for Church Multiplication Associates, author, blogger, and motorcycle riding instructor. She and her husband live in Minnesota with her three children.

Single. Female. Pastor.

by Stephanie Williams



Single. Female. Pastor. Three words that are hard to swallow for the general population, much less the Christian community. Add the word “young” and you will have described my reality during my twenties: young, single, female pastor. Not what I would want to lead with on a résumé. However, it doesn’t take long for these categories to stick, so this is how I have been defined for the last decade.

My time as a single woman stepping into my calling as a church planter and pastor hasn’t been an easy road. However, now that I am in my thirties, I can look back with clarity on my journey. I can see significant ways that others have risen in solidarity and support, giving me the opportunity to not only survive, but to thrive. Being defined by my marital status and gender is something that I have come to terms with personally, professionally, and spiritually. However, the evangelical community has not come to terms with how to navigate the growing population of single adults of all ages in its congregations. Not to mention those who are decidedly not in its congregations.

The failure to empower male and female single leaders of all ages, as well

women who are called to lead, is severely crippling the church.

First, discrimination against singles keeps gifted and available leaders off the front lines of ministry. Most single evangelical leaders find it extremely difficult to find employment in churches and Christian institutions; some job descriptions require the leader to be married to even be considered. Single leaders often have more available time and capacity than married leaders, but if there are no employment options within the church, they will be forced to choose other careers. All the while, the church desperately needs the time these leaders could’ve committed to equipping our congregations.

Second, these single leaders may just be the most capable in reaching one of the most unreached people groups in the US: other single people. In 2011,

Pew Research reported that 49% of all adults in the US are single. Yet, most churches have relatively few single adults in their congregations. When almost half the adult population identifies as single, but few of those are in church, I would suggest this makes singles one of the most unreached people groups in the United States today.

We need to realize what is at stake if the church does not empower single leaders: some of the most capable leaders will step out of ministry at a time when the church desperately needs leaders, especially those uniquely positioned to reach out to the unmarried population.

Empowering single leaders and tempering an unbiblical elevation of marriage over singleness is going to become increasingly important as the church steps into the future. I lead

The failure to empower male and female single leaders of all ages, as well women who are called to lead, is severely crippling the church.

a church that has a large number of “traditional” nuclear families, but also an unusual amount of singles, some of whom are single parents. Being a single, female pastor with a ministry to many singles has given me some perspective on what it looks like to empower single leaders. I offer this outline of what empowerment has looked like for me as a young, single, female pastor in the hopes that others in the Christian community will continue to rise to the occasion.

Drop the “prefix” when making hiring decisions

Very few leaders in the world have the opportunity to determine another person’s career like those who have the power to hire and fire. I have had the opportunity to lead largely because those with hiring power chose to consider me as a pastor, not a “single pastor” or a “female pastor.” I am a pastor and a leader and I happen to be single and female. There is no need to add “single”

I have had the opportunity to lead largely because those with hiring power chose to consider me as a pastor, not a “single pastor” or a “female pastor.” I am a pastor and a leader and I happen to be single and female.

or “female” as a “prefix” to the roles I play in the church. I was hired for who I am and my potential for growth as I mature in leadership, not my marital status or gender.

Leaders need to cast a vision that values all members of the church as contributors to our community. It is our job to create spaces where our communities can grow in their understanding of “family” to go beyond what we imagine a traditional nuclear family to be. This includes dropping traditional labels and evaluating candidates for ministry based on what gifts they bring to the table.

Significance without a significant other

Any time writer Shauna Niequist has an opportunity to speak in a college or young adult setting, she offers this statement: “You are significant with or without a significant other.” There are many messages in Christian culture that strongly suggest you are only significant if you have a significant other. Leaders in my community have affirmed that my significance is not tied to my marital status. Affirming gifts that I bring to the table, giving me a voice in important conversations, and giving me the space to lead are ways they’ve affirmed that I’m significant regardless of marital status.

In our Christian communities, do we elevate marriage to the point that it determines the significance we give to individuals? Do we constantly fixate on their dating life, always asking “if they’ve met someone?” Do we have a difficult time when someone experiences a divorce because we had attached more significance to that person because of their marital status? Do we create spaces among all ages and stages where singles feel a part of the family of God, rather than merely creating “singles groups” as their only hope for community?

When my community cares about my life holistically, it speaks significance into my life and reminds me that being a child of God, not my gender or marital status, is what determines my worth.

Get more Mutuality!

“A Celebration of Singleness” by Khristi Adams

“When I told him my relationship status was my business and that I was happy where I was, he said something that irks me to this day: ‘Marriage is the closest you can come to being like Christ.’”

His mentality reflects a skewed perspective that makes traditional marriage roles the Christian ideal, especially for women. It defines people through the lens of romantic relationships, not through the lens of Christ and community. To say that to be married is the closest we can come to being like Christ—a single man who died alone on a cross—is near heretical...

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Mutuality online at
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Friendship across ages and stages

One of the most significant ways I have been empowered in my singleness is through the deep friendships I have made across ages and life stages. The time I have spent with widows, men who have mentored me, and couples with and without kids has been paramount in helping me thrive as a leader and as a single person.

It can be difficult for people to engage in friendship with single people. It seems as though those who are married or who have kids can sometimes be at a loss for how to relate to a single individual. Though we don't have a spouse or kids to talk about, we live very full and meaningful lives and want to share those experiences with our friends. The couples and families who have learned to include me in their lives have given me the opportunity to experience a healthy sense of belonging.

Spending time with kids is also a wonderful opportunity for single people like me. I love getting to know these young children and getting to see life through their eyes. It's a gift to me when I get to be a part of these nuclear families, creating a new version of what an extended family

looks like. One that extends beyond biological or legal relatives.

Redefine "family"

This brings me to the final way that I have been empowered to thrive in my life as a single person: being part of community that has realized "family" must be redefined. I believe the success of the church is tied to how well we learn to be extended families on mission—families that are connected through the Holy Spirit and a common mission to love a broken and hurting world in the name of Jesus.

I live with young women that I disciple in a house I own on a street filled with broken people. We all experience brokenness that only God can heal and thus we all live in neighborhoods and work in places where we must pray that God's kingdom will come. My house of women and another house of women gather with three couples and their kids and live as an extended family on mission to love our neighborhood in the name of Jesus. Some of the moms mentor the young adults. The dads are constantly reaching out to the people in the margins of our neighborhood and encouraging the rest of us to participate with what God is doing.

People from all walks of life, from every age and life stage have the opportunity to thrive when they are a part of an extended family on mission. Such families are how God has chosen to be represented since the people of Israel. When you read through the book of Acts, families on mission were the vehicle for participation with God—the vehicle that started what we know to be the church.

We all have an opportunity to listen to those who are single in our community, to do our best to understand their life and calling. When we do so, we become people who can choose to empower rather than belittle, to include rather than marginalize.

I urge to you listen to those whose life experience is different than yours. That mutual understanding is how we can step toward becoming a family of God that includes and gives significance to all of God's children.



Stephanie is one of the lead pastors at Mill City Church in Minneapolis, MN. She is passionate about equipping the people of God to participate in what God is doing in their neighborhoods and work places. Stephanie is watching God move and telling the story at pastorsteph.com.



"Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will." – Romans 12:2 NIV

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We find our true identity in Christ, not in our gender or marital status. Join CBE and receive resources on the gospel's message to all men and women!

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We Are Family ... Or Are We?

by Claire Bonner

“My minister was blurring all women together with the term ‘wives’ in his sermon,” my friend told me over a cup of coffee. “It was so disheartening. It was really hard to hear. I felt like I was not valued as a woman because I was out of God’s will somehow in being single. I’d love to be married and have children. The fact that he didn’t recognize any of the single women in the congregation made my singleness twice as painful.”

She admitted that by the time the minister at her complementarian church asked all the women to stand at the end, praying for them in their roles as wives and mothers, tears had begun to stream down her face.

It was the first time I’d heard of such typecasting from a pulpit, so I began to ask questions of other friends attending complementarian churches like hers.

A single guy in his thirties admitted, “I’ve been told I need to ‘man up’—the implication is that I’m not married because I’m not mature enough.”

I became curious about how single adults were being cared for in the church and began studying the issue. My assumptions were immediately challenged. Because most people in my generation at church are married, I had thought single adults were a minority. I was surprised to learn that within Western populations, there is a steady increase in unmarried adults and one-person households. Many variables can account for this change, but the reality is that this is an expanding demographic. Yet, relatively few single adults are involved in churches.

Statistics tell us something about who attends church. But they don’t tell us what people experience or how they experience it. That’s what I wanted to find out. How is the church seeking to understand and respond to this reality? Do our teachings lead to practices that affirm singles in their lives and callings? Or do we isolate and exclude them, as my friend had experienced? I was specifically interested in learning from single adults in complementarian churches like the one my friend attended—churches that

often teach or imply that marriage and parenting are the Bible’s ideal for men and women. These questions became the basis of a six-month research project.

I set about interviewing single (never married) adults between the ages of thirty and fifty who attend complementarian churches. These adults are old enough to have witnessed peers marry and have children, but are probably not young enough to still have a secure hope of marrying one day. The individuals interviewed represent six different churches across three different denominations in Melbourne, Australia. Their names have been changed.

The Findings

Single adults are diverse, unique individuals, and the participants interviewed had differing ideas, opinions, and experiences. But their experiences have several features in common, summarized below.

Single adults receive little pastoral care. When I asked individuals about their experience of pastoral care in their churches, people seemed puzzled. Abbey stated bluntly that she didn’t know what to say. Scott described his personal experience of pastoral care as “spotty”

and “patchy.” Nikita laughed at the question and responded, “You have to be proactive in order to receive care.” Many of the participants noted that the onus is on them to ask for care.

Single adults’ needs are not understood. When asked why single adults receive little pastoral attention or care, Nikita commented that singles may have fewer perceived needs. “Your young families, and new moms, and those who are sick—there is an emphasis on supporting them or providing for their needs. Whereas I suppose we’re just seen as being quite competent adults, and we’re able to look after and care for ourselves.”

Dave echoed this idea, observing, “If someone comes in with a broken leg, everyone can look after them. But with [relational or emotional concerns] it’s much more difficult because it’s not visible on the outside unless you know what to look for.”

“A large proportion of people at church would not have a clue about the grief associated with not marrying or having children, and this could in some way be acknowledged by the church,” Nikita remarked. “This would have a lot to do with most of them having been married since they were in their early twenties, so they have spent most of their life living with someone—that is, moving from their parents’ home to then live as husband or wife. I don’t think they realize [single adults feel] a significant loss. Just because we are single doesn’t mean we don’t or didn’t want to be married with children. I don’t think it would register on their radar.”

Church demographic divisions leave single adults out. Participants repeatedly noted that divisions of the church into various groups based on age and stages of life are a barrier to connection and rob the church of diversity. They miss the connection with friends who have married, had children, and moved to a “young families” congregation or group.

Single adults also realize the importance of having spiritual mentors from diverse age groups and backgrounds, but homogenized congregations have limited opportunities for these relationships and make the church feel less like family. “Sometimes you kind of have a ghetto-ization of age groups within a church community,” Scott said. “It’s very difficult.”

Though the single adults I talked to realize that the reasons behind these decisions may be positive, it is also a source of sadness for those who find it difficult to locate their own place within such targeted congregations.

Single adults find the church a challenging place to cultivate friendships across genders. “I have good friends of both genders, inside the church and outside,” Abbey said. “It really, really bugs me that as a single female, being friends with a male person [at church] causes people to look with either excitement or suspicion or concern. People outside the church care much, much less about this.”

Single adults feel that their lives are not perceived to be as significant as married lives. In comparison to engagements, marriages, and births, achievements in a single adult’s life are less acknowledged and celebrated.

“Sometimes there is a sense, not just in churches but in society as a whole, that if you are single, then you are half-formed in a way,” said Scott. “That’s just my feeling, but I’ve yet to have a church experience where that feeling proved to be unfounded.”

“I know that single people have achieved amazing things at my church,” Abbey said, “but I only find out about those things after the service, not during.”

Conclusion: the church needs to be family

My overall observation is that single adults, like anyone else, need a nurturing family environment. Where traditional families have this support at home, singles often don’t. They may

THE NUMBERS

IN THE USA

- **49%** of all adults are unmarried
(Pew, 2011)
- One-person households represent approximately **1/4** of all households
(US Census Bureau, 2007)
- **38%** of unmarried adults attend church weekly, compared to 71% of all married adults with children
(Religion & Ethics NewsWeekly, 2005)

IN AUSTRALIA

- **51%** of all adults are unmarried
(Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2011)
- One-person households represent approximately **1/4** of all households
(Australian Institute of Family Studies, 2011)
- **35%** of all church attendees are unmarried
(National Church Life Survey, 2013)

live alone or with other single adults, each with their own lives. Some live far from their biological families. This makes it all the more important for the church to affirm and include single adults as part of the church family.

Jesus knew his disciples were his true family (Matt. 12:47–50), and all Christians are part of this family. But single adults often don't experience the church as the loving and caring spiritual family it should be. When church programming is built around traditional families, it only emphasizes the divide between single and married. Church leaders, therefore, have a great opportunity to facilitate churches that are spiritual families, and need to respond to the reality of the growing demographic of single adults within the Western world.

What about your church?

The complementarian churches of the single adults I interviewed reflect complementarian theology, placing emphasis on fulfilling marriage-based gender roles in the Christian life, and not knowing what to do with single adults.

But would the responses of single adults be different at egalitarian churches? Egalitarians strongly believe that serving God as male or female is not about fitting a particular mold of gender roles. Rather than pigeonholing men and women, egalitarians seek to encourage individuals in their God-given gifts and abilities. And egalitarians believe that the biblical ideal for community is one that invites all members to serve and benefit fully. Yet I fear that gender roles,

along with societal expectations, infiltrate doctrine and practice more than we realize.

So, I issue a challenge to egalitarian churches: ask your single adults for honest reflections on their experience in the church. And really listen to them. What does their experience of church tell you about your theology and your practice? Do the two align? The results could be helpful in continuing to change the church into the family. For everyone.



Claire Bonner lives in Melbourne, Australia, and is in her final year of a Masters of Divinity at Ridley College. She has a passion for pastoral care, discipleship, and building community within the church. She loves coffee, painting, music, and understanding people.

R

eflect with us... *by Jo Ellen Heil*

God, Grace, and Purity

In the Christian single world, many people equate purity with sex—or lack thereof! But just as our sexuality is more than intercourse, purity is far more than sex. Purity stems from the heart. It is a way of being, seeing, speaking, and living. It is a gift of grace from God.

Jesus of Nazareth, a single, celibate man, promoted purity in his earthly ministry. He reminded his disciples that it was not unclean foods, but that which came from within, such as speech and actions, which made a person impure. When a woman caught in adultery was brought to him, he cleverly shamed her accusers and publically forgave her. And in his Sermon on the Mount he joyfully proclaimed, “blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God!” (Matt. 5:8 NIV).

A multi-cultural, multilingual tentmaker and traveler, Paul was a single man who strengthened his own purity by writing to friends and co-workers across the miles. To the Corinthians, he wrote, “By our purity, knowledge, patience, and kindness we have shown ourselves to be God’s servants—

by the Holy Spirit, by our true love, by our message of truth and by the power of God” (2 Cor. 6:6–7).

A true teacher, Paul had high hopes for those he loved. He urged those in Corinth to adopt a godly lifestyle even in the midst of their notoriously corrupt city: “All these promises are made to us, my dear friends. So then, let us purify ourselves from everything that makes body or soul unclean, and let us be completely holy by living in awe of God” (2 Cor. 7:1). To those in Rome, he shared these words via his co-laborer Phoebe: “Do not let what you regard as good get a bad name. . . We must always aim at those things that bring peace and that help strengthen one another.” (Romans 14:16, 19). And he reminded Titus and the believers in Crete that purity could be a grace-filled gift that encompassed everyone: “For God has revealed his grace for the salvation of all humanity. That grace instructs us to give up ungodly living and worldly passions and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this world” (Titus 2:11–12).

We can still echo Paul’s heartfelt words today: “By God’s grace I am what I am, and the grace that he gave me was not without effect” (1 Cor. 15:10).

Unless otherwise noted, Bible quotations from the Good News Bible.

CBE Launches New Website

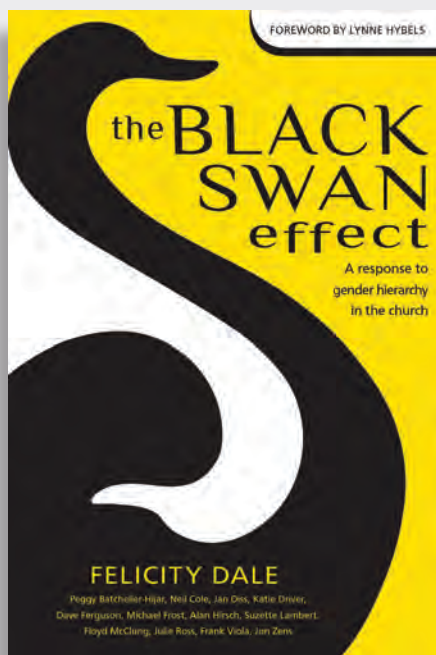
We are proud to announce the launch of our new website, which rolled out mid-August. We've been hard at work on this new site for over a year, and are thrilled to see it up and running. After gathering feedback from our users, we decided to build a content-focused website that would better enable the egalitarian community to access and share the resources CBE has produced over the years.

Here are a few of the highlights...

- **All-new homepage.** Visitors will now find the latest blog post, a featured article, information about our upcoming conference, and information about CBE right on the homepage. We've also added recommended resources and quick links to manage your membership, subscribe to *Arise*, and give to CBE. The blog, featured article, and recommended resources will change regularly, so come back often to find new content.



Our new homepage, featuring our content and offering quick access to frequently-used functions.



Does our traditional view of Scripture overlook something powerful?

Could the role of women be crucial to the church's future?

Change is coming. Are you ready?
theblackswaneffect.com



Our new Articles page hosts the archives of *Mutuality*, *Priscilla Papers*, our blog, and *Arise*. By the end of 2014, virtually every article we've published will be available on our site.

- **Content focus.** Our old website had a few free articles; our new site hosts almost all our articles, and most are free. By the end of 2014, we'll have every article of *Mutuality* and *Priscilla Papers* available on our site. Members will have access to every article, and all but the last three years of each journal will be free to the public. All our *Arise* columns, blog posts, and special edition journals are also available for free.
- **Mobile-friendly.** Our new site was designed to be functional and appealing across a variety of devices. The new site will adapt to whatever device you're using to access it, whether that's a computer, tablet, or phone of any size.
- **A strong foundation.** Some of the most important features of our new site are beneath the surface. We've focused on developing a site with a solid structure and core functionality. This provides us a strong and flexible foundation, meaning that over time, we'll be able to build in more features and functions.

Giving Opportunities

We hope that you have enjoyed learning about the new CBE website. We are excited to bring you expanded content, more opportunities to interact with CBE, and more accessibility!

Educating Christians on the biblical basis for full equality of men and women is what CBE exists to do, and we believe that this new website will help us expand our mission in exciting new ways.

To provide these great services, we need your support. It cost \$25,000 to design and implement this new website. As we continue to add new services and features, this cost will only rise.

Join with us in providing groundbreaking CBE content like never before by contributing to this valuable service.

To contribute, go to cbe.today/newweb

Save the Date

November 13 is Give to the Max Day! When you donate on this day, your gift to CBE counts for more through matching funds and prize grants. Partner with us on November 13 as we seek to further the message of biblical equality!

by Mimi Haddad

CBE in Colombia

Christian identity and ministry in South America

“As a theologian, I read Scripture and make decisions as to what is correct biblically. I work alone, without feedback such as yours. I will always remember your stories. Thank you!”

These are the words of a leading South American theologian who attended CBE’s Colombia conference, “Male and Female in Christ: Toward a Biblical View of Christian Identity and Ministry.” Held this July in Medellín, Colombia and hosted in partnership with Fundación Universitaria Seminario Bíblico de Colombia (FUSBC), the conference brought together theologians, pastors, lawyers, students, and NGO leaders. For three days, we explored Christian identity as male and female.

Speakers addressed topics including identity, the Trinity, abuse, Christian relationships, and more. Lectures were delivered in Spanish or English, with live translation. Lively conversations erupted in Spanish, English, and French during discussions and meals. Guests were also delighted to receive resources. Our free resources were gone within thirty minutes, including 300 copies of *Lado a Lado*, the Spanish version of *Still Side by Side*.

The event ended as it began, embraced by a warm and sincere FUSBC community. We toured Medellín and scaled its lush mountains on cable cars, marveling at the beauty of the city. We found a home in Medellín, where we were welcomed by the simplicity of love, the embrace of Christian community, and the devotion to work out our faith as brothers and sisters equally commissioned by Christ.



Conference attendees enjoyed the picturesque views of Medellín and the warm hospitality of its residents.



CBE’s free resources, including 300 copies of *Lado a Lado* (*Still Side by Side*) were gone within half an hour.

What People Are Saying

Reflections from the conference

Something that I really enjoyed about the conference was being able to talk with the speakers. It was cool that the English-speaking tourists and speakers went on tours, dinners, and shopping dates together. We were able to really bond and get exclusive access to almost all of the plenary and workshop speakers. Through the reading material and the experiences at Colombia, I was able to increase my knowledge by juxtaposing the way women in the world should be treated according to the Bible and how, in fact, the fallen world interprets or defies these orders.

— Janell Koide, Vanguard University Senior



Attendees meet in small groups for discussion.

This conference opened my eyes to a deeper understanding of gender equality and has encouraged me to be more open-minded and intentional as I dig deeper into the Word of God. As a result, I am able integrate this newfound knowledge and apply it to all aspects of my life, especially my faith.

— Serene Shahoud, Vanguard University Junior

I cannot thank CBE and FUSBC enough for all of their hard work. Their contribution to our students has changed their trajectory and will impact everyone in their communities. The ripple effect builds momentum!

— Sandra Morgan, Director of the Global Center for Women and Justice, Vanguard University

We were delighted to find the Colombians so receptive to Christ's message of liberation for women and men. Although the trip should have been exhausting, we were refreshed spiritually and physically.

— Aída and Bill Spencer, Conference Speakers



CBE conference coordinator Florkime Paye, Aída and Bill Spencer, and CBE president Mimi Haddad

Visit cbe.today/la2015 for information about our 2015 conference.

Registration opens in October!



Single But Never Alone

Exulting in celibacy and singlehood, the apostle Paul reminds the church in Corinth that the anxieties of marriage are part of a world that is “passing away” (1 Cor. 7:31). Of course, nothing could be further from the sentiments of Christians today. Our pursuit of romance and marriage is out of step with previous generations of Christians, who formed communities of love and service to Christ, free from distraction. Teeming with spiritual and intellectual life, these communities produced significant advances in science, medicine, philosophy, and theology. What is more, they were also places of enormous companionship and love. Unmarried but never alone, single Christians drained the swamps, fed the poor, kept the Scriptures alive, and preserved Christianity from peril. Consider some prominent examples.

Widowed at an early age, ardent in faith and endowed with enormous wealth, Paula (AD 347–404) befriended the Bible scholar Jerome (AD 347–420) and together they pursued a life of simplicity, prayer, and service in Palestine. With her vast wealth, Paula purchased ancient manuscripts and together with Jerome, produced the Latin Vulgate—the most significant translation in history. Though she is rarely mentioned as a contributor, without Paula we would have no Vulgate. Jerome acknowledged her spiritual and intellectual leadership, comparing her to Deborah: “while Barak trembled, Deborah saved Israel.” Paula also built monasteries and hospitals, spending her talents, treasure, and time making known the glories of Christ. Though she dressed in silk in Rome, she welcomed poverty, celibacy, and anonymity in Palestine, devoting herself to the needs of others. She recognized that this world, in its present form, is passing away.

Macrina the Younger (AD 330–379) led a community of Christians in Turkey. Referred to simply as “Teacher,” Macrina was joined by her two brothers, Basil the Great (AD 330–379) and Gregory of Nyssa (AD 335–395), both Cappadocian Fathers and contributors to the Nicene Creed. Macrina’s community, where everyone lived as equals, attracted singles, both wealthy and poor.

Isolated on the island of Iona was another community of single Christians, formed in AD 563. Men and women lived in close proximity in a community committed to prayer, worship, and scholarship. Here, Scripture was preserved, transcribed, and illuminated. If not for the work of this community and others like it, the Bible would have been lost.

Centuries later, fasting from opulence and wealth, Francis (1181–1226) and Clare (1194–1253) founded what is known today as the Franciscan order, which emphasizes poverty. They realized this world is passing away, and they renewed Christian faith through their devotion to simplicity, service, and prayer.



Saint Clare of Assisi, co-founder of the Franciscan tradition

Among Protestants, too, celibate communities have abounded and for similar reasons: to focus on prayer and service. Working in Calcutta, Pandita Ramabai (1858–1922) founded the Mukti Mission (*Mukti* means liberation, freedom, or salvation), a community of women serving widows, sex slaves, and handicapped girls and women. Widowed herself, Ramabai devoted her enormous energy and talents to translating the Greek and Hebrew texts into Marathi, the language of her region. In all of history, this is the only Bible completed entirely by women. Mukti Mission was Christ’s kingdom in action.

Like Ramabai, Amy Carmichael (1867–1951) devoted her life to girls and women in India, particularly the temple prostitutes, called *Devadasi*. Because her work was so dangerous, Carmichael worked only beside single women, unwilling to put families of married workers in harm’s way. Single but never alone, Carmichael is considered one of the greatest missionaries of the modern era.

For communities of Christians throughout history, singlehood was not only a means of service. It was also a form of protest—a refusal to allow the false gods of this world to dictate the value or vocation of men and women created in God’s image and thereby endowed with spiritual gifts and authority for service. They lived out of the knowledge that the world in its present form is passing away.

Praise

- Our new website is up and running. Our new site offers better functionality, a fresh look, and hundreds more articles. Our bookstore website has also gotten a facelift!
- CBE's conference in Colombia was a success! Our free resources flew off the shelves and attendees were excited to hear CBE's message.
- We're thrilled to have John Stackhouse, Adelita Garza, Ken Fong, Anne Zaki, and Eugene Cho speaking in LA. Learn more about the LA conference at cbe.today/la2015.

Prayer

- Pray for more monthly donors, and for wisdom in applying for grants to fund the many projects CBE is working on.
- Give to the Max Day is coming on November 13. In recent years, this has been our single largest fundraising event of the year. Pray for generous donors and another successful Give to the Max Day.
- Pray for the CBE chapters and partner organizations around the world to continue to make an impact in their communities.

Christians for Biblical Equality

Christians for Biblical Equality (CBE) is an organization of Christian men and women who believe that the Bible, properly interpreted, teaches the fundamental equality of believers of all ethnic groups, all economic classes, and all age groups, based on the teachings of Scripture as reflected in Galatians 3:28.

Mission Statement

CBE affirms and promotes the biblical truth that all believers—without regard to gender, ethnicity or class—must exercise their God-given gifts with equal authority and equal responsibility in church, home and world.

Statement of Faith

- We believe the Bible is the inspired Word of God, is reliable, and is the final authority for faith and practice.
- We believe in the unity and trinity of God, eternally existing as three equal persons.
- We believe in the full deity and full humanity of Jesus Christ.
- We believe in the sinfulness of all persons. One result of sin is shattered relationships with God, others, and self.
- We believe that eternal salvation and restored relationships are possible through faith in Jesus Christ who died for us, rose from the dead, and is coming again. This salvation is offered to all people.
- We believe in the work of the Holy Spirit in salvation, and in the power and presence of the Holy Spirit in the life of believers.
- We believe in the equality and essential dignity of men and women of all ethnicities, ages, and classes. We recognize that all persons are made in the image of God and are to reflect that image in the community of believers, in the home, and in society.
- We believe that men and women are to diligently develop and use their God-given gifts for the good of the home, church, and society.
- We believe in the family, celibate singleness, and faithful heterosexual marriage as God's design.
- We believe that, as mandated by the Bible, men and women are to oppose injustice.

To learn more about CBE's core values, history, and ministry, visit cbe.today/info.

CBE Membership

CBE offers individual and organizational memberships. Membership is available to those who support CBE's Statement of Faith. Members join a community of believers dedicated to biblical equality, and who together make CBE's ministry possible. Member benefits include:

- Subscriptions to CBE's quarterly publications, *Mutuality* magazine and *Priscilla Papers* journal, including digital access to back issues
- Exclusive discounts at CBE's bookstore
- Discounted registration to attend CBE conferences

Visit cbe.today/members to renew your membership, become a member, or learn more about our membership program.

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Singleness and Community: Glorifying God in the Church Body

Bonnie E. Field and Christine Colón

R599 | Available in CD and MP3 formats

Field and Colón explore the difficulties that Christian singles often have integrating into their local churches, and the dangers this poses for the church as a whole. They discuss the theological significance of singleness, the unique truths that celibacy teaches us about God, and explore what singles, married couples, and church leadership can do to build a community where everyone is valued and encouraged to serve God with the gifts they have been given.



Singleness and Sexuality: Glorifying God in Our Physical Bodies

Christine Colón and Bonnie E. Field

R600 | Available in CD and MP3 formats

Colón and Field explore the problematic messages that Christian singles receive both from the secular world and the church community that make it difficult to live appropriately as sexual beings created by God, remaining celibate. Turning to Scripture, church history, and contemporary Christian thought to reveal a more positive view of celibacy, the speakers discuss what celibate sexuality might look like and why God calls us to live celibate lives outside of marriage.



Scandal of Equality in First-Century Christian Teaching

David Instone-Brewer

R403 | Available in CD and MP3 formats

To a first-century Jew or Gentile, one of the potentially scandalous aspects of the teachings of Jesus and his followers was the assumption that men and women were of equal standing in law and before God. Their lip service to the morality of Aristotle (that slaves, women, and children should submit to the pater familias) probably fooled no one. This close reading of household codes in the New Testament epistles in their first-century contexts shows how early Christians transformed cultural values about the family.



History of Single Women and Men in the Church

Jo Ellen Heil

R462 | Available in CD and MP3 formats

Think that history is filled only with the deeds of married folk? Learn about single women and men who shared God's love with those around them and changed the world. Whether dedicated to the single life or unwillingly widowed, these gifted souls made a difference from the islands of the Kingdom of Hawaii to the inner cities of the modern civil rights movement.