

The Realities of Singleness

*“There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.”
Gal 3:28*

In recent years, the singleness rate in America has risen to a new high. According to the 2017 Census, 45 percent of adults are single (either never married, widowed or divorced) - a great shift from the 28 percent rate found in 1960. Inevitably, this shift has affected the demographics within our church as well. As we consider this statistic, it can be helpful as a church body to understand some common realities, both positive and negative, singles may encounter, particularly singles that live alone.

Loneliness and Isolation

A common struggle for singles can be loneliness and isolation. Of all U.S. households, 28 percent are comprised of people who live alone. For those that are married or have a family, consider how much of your life is lived in community with your spouse or kids. For those that live alone, a common community takes time and effort to foster in their lives. It can be difficult for the working single to plan events or have people over for supper. Often due to children’s bedtimes, space, etc., it is easier for a family to have a single over versus the logistics of the family coming to a single’s home. As a church family, let us remember those in our lives who may be on their own and consider having them join you for a meal or a family activity or outing.

Another reality of isolation is the temptations it can bring. While everyone goes through periods of loneliness at different stages of their life, there can be increased temptations when you are by yourself regularly. These periods of aloneness can lead to patterns of behavior and coping that are not helpful or edifying. It is important for those who live alone to reach out to others in their life for accountability around areas such as time management and purity. We are stronger in community than when facing temptation in isolation (*Ecc. 4:9-12*).

Insecurities

Time alone can be helpful or harmful depending on a person’s personality. On one hand, it can bring about positive reflection and quiet time with the Lord but on the other hand, it can bring about unhealthy rumination and breed insecurities. When disconnected, Satan can attack individuals with lies around their singleness, making them feel inferior in status or rank to those married. Questions such as “Why has no one chosen me to be their spouse?”, “What’s wrong with me?”, or “Am I enough?” are common doubts that can enter a single person’s mind. As a church member, it can be tempting to offer words like “I know God has someone really special for you” or “Your turn will come” as an attempt to encourage a single, yet these words can often seem hollow. Perhaps marriage is not God’s plan for their life. Instead, focus on listening well and practicing empathy while considering the never-changing encouragements from God’s Word that can reinforce truth in their daily walk- passages such as *Jeremiah 29:11* and *Isaiah 55:8-12*.

Sharing

Whom do you go to when you have a special joy or deep disappointment in your life? Whom do you counsel with when wrestling through a difficult decision? For those married, the immediate response tends to be their spouse. For those widowed or single again, losing someone they have done life with for many years can be an acute loss and it can be difficult to adjust to this new reality. For those who have never been married, it can be easy to become independent and closed off. For singles, there is a unique opportunity to experience Christ’s sufficiency in a deep way as they walk through difficulties on their own. Yet while God’s grace is abundant, having close friends or family members who are willing to empathize through difficult emotions can be hugely valuable (*Gal. 6:2*). It is a valuable exercise for the single to consider who in their life they can share sad news or exciting joy. In addition, for the church, it is important to think through what special singles (never-married, widowed, divorced) they can make an intentional effort to build a loving relationship with so singles have someone to turn to.

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In closing the joys of singleness can be many, but unique realities also make it challenging. As the percentage of singles increases, it is important for fellow church members to consider ways they can reach out, support all individuals whether married or single, and encourage healthy growth and connectedness among the entire church body. The challenges singles face are not remedied only through marriage or roommates. Rather, these realities and tensions highlight a great opportunity for the church to come together and provide an extended sense of family in the life of a single. These challenges will take effort and intentionality from both sides to reach out and let others in, but by God's grace, these tensions can be managed in beautiful ways that illustrate the sufficiency of Christ.