

A Commission to Singles in the Church

“From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love.” Eph. 4.16

In a conflicted society with many viewpoints regarding singleness, it is important for the church to be a welcoming, safe place where singles can integrate into the fabric of their church family. While the church has some ownership in making this a reality, singles' attitudes and choices also play a vital role. The following are some questions for singles to reflect upon and the church family to encourage into, as the answers can influence the way an individual interacts within their church body.

1. **How am I supporting my church?** In an individualistic culture entitlement is an easy trap to fall into, believing the local church should be serving us. However, the truth is we will gain as much as we invest. It can be easy to view church as a Sunday or Wednesday night event when church support should be occurring *every* day of the week. There are a variety of ways to serve the local church throughout the week - attending Bible studies, participating in local church activities and missions, or connecting with others through planned interactions such as meeting for coffee, a meal, or even going for a walk. National church events are open to all and help one feel connected to the larger denomination. It is important to reflect on our choices and ask oneself if our choices are helping strengthen our connection to our local and national church body or reinforce isolation.
2. **What is my mission?** For some individuals this may mean a specific, more customary role in their local congregation, such as serving as a Sunday School teacher or song leader. Others may find purpose and meaning through less formal roles, such as singing at a local nursing home or engaging in an opportunity to mentor or disciple another. Still for other individuals, God may have laid on their heart to participate in a local community ministry, such as volunteering at the local food bank, hospital, or a foster care agency. God has gifted everyone in some way (*1 Cor. 12:7*) and using your gifting or passions not only blesses others but is also a way to serve the Lord. Whether married or single, taking ownership in opportunities and committing to serve diligently is important.
3. **What does patience amidst disappointment look like for me?** We live in a broken world, and as such, our lives will inevitably hold frustrations. For singles that desire to be married, it can be easy to place the blame for singleness or feelings of disappointment at the church. Often, we tell ourselves “a story” that a certain church office or position will not come our way due to our marital status. While there may be grains of truth in this scenario, singles should also consider what they *can do* and what *opportunities* they do have in their local church. If singles have genuine desires, prayerfully talk with your elder or church leaders. Disappointment and frustrations can come with a myriad of emotions and hurts. It is important to consider how God wants to redeem these frustrations as he sanctifies and grows us through them.
4. **What unrealistic standards do I hold for my church?** No church is perfect. It is not wrong for a single to desire to be accepted and treated as an equal in their congregation. The reality is, however, that most churches, within and outside our denomination, will always operate from a marriage and family lens, as the majority of leadership and congregants will be in this stage of life. As such, singles need to recognize the tension they may feel might always exist. Singles can choose to let this tension become a frustration or choose to live well and abide in their current status (*1 Cor. 7:24*). Each individual is accountable for the feelings of discontentment, bitterness, or even at times superiority they feel towards their brothers and sisters in Christ. As members one to another (*Rom. 12:5*), let us all remember that marital status doesn't have to define us or create division or isolation within the church family.

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5. **Are insecurities keeping me from engaging?** Sometimes a person's well-hidden insecurities emerge on the surface and seem to be highlighted by their singleness. Perhaps an individual feels insecure about their appearance, age, or personality. Due to these insecurities, they may find themselves withdrawing from fellowship, leaving room for Satan's attack. Consider this - travel and fellowship are a unique opportunity in our church culture and the strength of community is strong. As a single person, do you take advantage of these opportunities or use the excuse that you are too old or introverted for such activities? Without a doubt, social invitations get more difficult to accept once an individual enters the workforce. There are limited hours in the day to complete one's workload and daily tasks. Singles must ensure they are making wise choices with time-management and not neglecting their legitimate, individual needs. Yet singles should also be mindful to not turn down social or serving opportunities due to selfishness or insecurities.
6. **What is my view of God?** Singles have a unique opportunity to serve God whole-heartedly without the distractions of a spouse or family (*I Cor. 7:32-35*). Do you embrace this for the gift it is? It can be easy to develop discontentment or distrust with God if things in your life have not gone as expected. Over time, this can create a substantial barrier in your relationship with the Lord. Be careful this does not become your new normal, as believers often attempt to fill in spiritual gaps with unhealthy relationships or behaviors. As believers, our sufficiency is found in Christ (*2 Cor. 12:9*). For a single, this sufficiency will sustain you as you take time to invest in your relationship with Christ.

How we view ourselves can greatly influence the way we interact with others. The church needs singles who are confident in their God-given identity and who are willing to serve as a powerful testimony of Christ's sufficiency to others. Singles, at different life stages, who are living lives with purpose and meaning and actively making investments within their local congregations provide a great example of the Gospel. Embracing the unique opportunities God has given you through your singleness, and not because of your singleness, helps keep discouragement and insecurities minimal. Faithfully serving, regardless of your marital status, is a way to honor God as we share his love and gospel message to the world.