

For Single Men and Women (And the Rest of Us)

John Piper

We know you are there---almost sixty million of you in America. And we are listening. One of the most important things we have learned is that we do not know what it is like to be single in America today---at least not the way you know it. Margaret Clarkson made this very plain to us:

Because married people were all single once, they tend to think that they know all there is to know about singleness. I suggest that this is not so; that there is a vast difference between being single at 25 or 30, with marriage still a viable possibility, and being single at 45 or 50 or 60, with little or no prospect of ever being anything else. Singleness has a cumulative effect on the human spirit which is entirely different at 50 than at 30. {1}

What I would like to do in this foreword is try to let single people do as much of the talking as possible---people like Jesus and the Apostle Paul and some contemporary men and women who serve in the single life. This way we will be listening and speaking at the same time. I realize I am going to filter all of this through my happily married lens. It is futile in one sense for me to write this chapter, except that I do not put it forward as something definitive about the single experience today, but as a call to married folks to listen and a statement to single folks that this book and this issue have to do with you, even though many of its chapters deal with marriage. Enough singles have read this foreword already to let me know that some things I say hit the nail on the head and some things do not fit their experience at all. My hope is to listen closely enough and speak truly enough that married and single people will be helped along in the conversation.

We also pray that in the process there will be tremendous encouragement and challenge for your faith and ministry. We believe the vision of manhood and womanhood in this book is utterly relevant for single people. Why this is so will become clear before we come to the end of this foreword.

We hear at least eight important theses on singleness when we tune in to Jesus and His contemporary single followers. {2}

I. Marriage, as we know it in this age, is not the final destiny of any human.

My mother was killed in a bus collision near Bethlehem in Israel in 1974. She was fifty-six years old and had been married to my father for thirty-seven years. As the grief began to heal, God gave my father another wonderful wife. I rejoice in this. But it has caused me to take much more seriously the words of Jesus to the Sadducees concerning marriage in the resurrection. They told Jesus about a woman who was widowed seven times. "At the resurrection," they asked, "whose wife will she be?" Jesus answered, "When the dead rise, they will neither marry nor be given in marriage; they will be like the angels in heaven" (Mark 12:25).

This is important to me because it means my father will not be a bigamist in the age to come. Why? Because in the resurrection, marriage as we know it will not exist. This has profound significance for singleness in this life. It means that if two wives will not be one too many, then no wives will not be one too few. If love in the age to come is transposed into a key above and beyond the melody of marriage in this life, then singleness here will prove to be no disadvantage in eternity.

In fact, there is some warrant for thinking that the kinds of self-denial involved in singleness could make one a candidate for greater capacities for love in the age to come. No one has left anything for the sake of the kingdom, says the Lord Jesus, who will not receive back far more (Matthew 19:27-30). Many unmarried people have strengthened their hands with this truth. For example, Trevor Douglas, a single missionary with Regions Beyond Missionary Union, working in the Philippines among the Ifugao people, wrote in 1988:

In the end, however, Christians know that Jesus will more than make up for every cost incurred by being a single male missionary. As I have applied his promises in Matthew 19:27-30 to myself, I see a tremendous exchange taking place in eternity. The social cost of not fitting in a couple's world will be exchanged for socializing with Jesus around his throne. I'll trade the emotional cost of loneliness and the family hurt for companionship with new fathers, mothers, and families. I'll exchange the physical cost for spiritual children. And when I'm snubbed, I love to think of eternity and the privilege of going from the last of the gospel preachers to the head of the line. The rewards are worth everything. {3}

II. Jesus Christ, the most fully human person who ever lived, was not married.

In 1987, I wrote an editorial for the Minneapolis Star-Tribune during a volatile controversy over advertising condoms on television. {4} The concern of the networks was to help curb the spread of AIDS. My basic point was: "In the act of endorsing protection from disease, the ads also endorse its cause, namely, sexual promiscuity." I said that the claim that condoms make for "safe" sex betrayed an incredible naiveté about human nature.

My argument went like this: "Personhood is deeper and more significant than what is physical. Only a superficial view of personhood says we will be 'safe' if we can avoid a disease while pursuing acts that Western civilization has overwhelmingly called immoral and that the Bible indicts as dishonoring to our creator. . . . Not only the Biblical teaching but also the testimony of human conscience in varied cultures around the world have said for centuries that extramarital sex and homosexual activity are destructive to personhood, to relationships and to

the honor of God, who made our sexuality to deepen and gladden the union of man and woman in marriage.”

You can imagine that this did not go unchallenged. I got a letter from one young man who spoke for a certain group of single people when he said, “My girlfriend and I have lots of good sex together. We think your ideas are repressive leftovers from the Victorian era that make people neurotic and miserable. We think our sexuality is part of our personhood, and not to enjoy it is to be incomplete people. We have no intention of getting married to meet the expectations of any puritans. And we think a life of slavery to virginity would mean being only half human.”{5}

When I wrote back to this man, the centerpiece of my response was this: The most fully human person who has ever lived, or ever will live, is Jesus Christ, and He never once had sexual intercourse.

This can be powerfully liberating to single people who may think at times, “This one thing I will never have, sexual relations, and in not having it I will not be all I was meant to be.” To this thought Jesus, the virgin, says, “A student is not above his teacher, but everyone who is fully trained will be like his teacher” (Luke 6:40). We will always have mountains of truly human Christ-likeness yet to climb, but sexual intercourse is not one of them. For He never knew it. And He is infinitely whole.

The paradox we may feel in this is captured in the title of Luci Swindoll’s book on singleness: *Wide My World, Narrow My Bed*. Single by choice at forty-nine (when she wrote the book), she shows that the narrow path of the Son of Man, who had no place to lay his head (not even on a woman’s shoulder), leads into a wide world of wonder and freedom and joy and love. {6}

Cheryl Forbes illustrates how she and other single women and men have been inspired by the “wideness” of Jesus’ single life:

Jesus is the example to follow. He was single. He was born to serve. . . . He had deep friendships among all sorts of people---men, women, single, married. That was his work, an intimate part of his ultimate mission of dying on the cross for our sins. . . . His relationships with Mary, Martha, Peter, and the other disciples helped prepare him for his death. No one can love in the abstract. He allowed himself to be interrupted by needy children, distraught fathers, hungry men and sick women. . . . Jesus sought to make himself vulnerable. {7}

III. The Bible celebrates celibacy because it gives extraordinary opportunity for single-minded investment in ministry for Christ.

Paul said that he wished everyone could know the freedom for ministry that he enjoyed as a single person (1

Corinthians 7:7). He went on to explain,

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 Corinthians 7:32-35).

Many single people give thanks for this truth in their own lives. It seems to come out most often in a cherished freedom for flexible scheduling and for risk-taking. As a single missionary in Kenya, Rhena Taylor wrote:

Being single has meant that I am free to take risks that I might not take were I a mother of a family dependent on me. Being single has given me freedom to move around the world without having to pack up a household first. And this freedom has brought to me moments that I would not trade for anything else this side of eternity. {8}

Trevor Douglas similarly describes the freedom for risk that he has experienced:

The first advantage [of being single] is that it's best adapted to perilous situations. . . . In rugged life among primitive tribes, in guerrilla-infested areas, or in disease and famine, the single man has only himself to worry about. . . . Paul claims that being single and male best fits the shortness of the time. Doing God's work is a momentary thing. Advantages and opportunities come and go very quickly. The single lifestyle enables one to get the most out of the time God gives for his work. . . . One of my chief delights is that I don't have to fit my ministry around a family schedule. I don't have to be home at a certain time each night. My time is the Filipinos' time. {9}

Douglas quotes one of his heroes, another single missionary with radical single-mindedness, David Brainerd:

I cared not where or how I lived, or what hardships I went through, so that I could but gain souls for Christ. While I was asleep I dreamed of these things, and when I awoke the first thing I thought of was this great work. All my desire was for the conversion of the heathen, and all my hope was in God. {10}

A single friend at our church read this third point and responded like this to balance the scales:

I believe that singles have flexibility in scheduling but are not totally free from anxiety. While I'm happy to be free from balancing husband and family needs and ministry, I must face other "practical" needs should Jesus tarry---retirement, housing, finances, etc. The reality is that single women have to plan for the future as singles. We must be good stewards with the resources we have, but studies show that women don't earn the same salaries that men do for the same tasks. And in ministry everyone earns less than in the secular world, but it's a choice that has been made, but that doesn't mean I don't feel the tension.

How do singles balance a career that requires more than forty hours a week plus other outside commitments (continuing education, etc.) with the “extraordinary opportunity for single-minded investment in ministry”? I think there will be those singles who interpret this to mean that because they are not married they are “expected” to devote every non-working hour to ministry---something not expected from those who are married. I don’t think that is what you are saying.

Unfortunately there are many in the church who reinforce this error in thinking. This thinking can turn into an abusive situation. Singles can be guilted and shamed into doing too much. I believe there must be a caution to singles not to become “over-invested.” Singles must protect their spiritual, physical, and emotional health as well as those who are married. Singles need to be affirmed to take time to develop nurturing relationships (“family”).

IV. The Apostle Paul and a lot of great missionaries after him have renounced marriage for the sake of the kingdom of God.

“Don’t we have the right to take a believing wife along with us, as do the other apostles and the Lord’s brothers and Cephas?” (1 Corinthians 9:5). With these words Paul shows that it was normal and permissible for him as an apostle to have a wife. But he chose not to use this legitimate right (cf. 1 Corinthians 9:15). He was the first of a long line of single men and women who have renounced marriage for the sake of the gospel, as Jesus said some would: “For some . . . have renounced marriage because of the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 19:12).

This renunciation has, in most cases, required immense courage and devotion to Christ. Ada Lum, a single woman working with International Fellowship of Evangelical Students in Southeast Asia, told this moving story of devotion:

Flying from Rome to Munich I had warm fellowship with an attractive and spirited nun. I learned this was her first visit home to Germany after thirty years as a missionary. No wonder she was excited! I could also tell that she loved Christ and had served him happily even through the war in the Philippines, where she had been imprisoned in an enemy camp. We talked about our faith in Jesus Christ and our walk with him. Then she showed me her plain gold ring on the inside of which was inscribed, “Wed to Christ.” But there certainly was nothing neurotic about her. She was refreshingly human! {11}

Mary Slessor was doing work in the interior of Calabar, West Africa, at the end of the nineteenth century and was deeply desirous of a companion. Her hope centered on Charles Morrison, a man who was working with the mission on the coast. They were engaged, but the mission would not allow him to transfer to the interior because of his poor health. She would have to move to Duke Town. She wrote:

It is out of the question. I would never take the idea into consideration. I could not leave my work for such a reason. To leave a field like Okoyong without a worker and go to one of ten or a dozen where the people have an open Bible and plenty of privilege! It is absurd. If God does not send him up here then he must do his work and I must do mine where we have been placed. If he does not come I must ask the Committee to give me someone else for it is impossible for me to work the station alone. {12}

With similar single-minded devotion to her calling, Lottie Moon broke an engagement with a brilliant young scholar because he “adopted the Darwinian theory of evolution.” Years later she said, “God had first claim on my life, and since the two conflicted, there could be no question about the result.” {13}

Elisabeth Elliot tells of a conversation she had with Gladys Aylward, missionary to China:

She had been a missionary in China for six or seven years before she ever thought of wanting a husband. When a British couple came to work near her, she began to watch the wonderful thing they had in marriage, and to desire it for herself. Being a woman of prayer she prayed---a straightforward request that God would call a man from England, send him straight out to China, and have him propose. She leaned toward me on the sofa on which we were sitting, her black eyes snapping, her bony little forefinger jabbing at my face. Elisabeth, she said, “I believe God answers prayer! He called him.” Then, in a whisper of keen intensity, “but he never came.” {14}

One of the reasons the choice to be single can be courageous is that for some it is the choice of very painful loneliness. Trevor Douglas illustrates this with a story from one of his friends:

Perhaps loneliness takes the heaviest toll. At creation, God knew that man needed companionship. The single male missionary forfeits that legitimate need and embraces loneliness. I well remember how a fellow single missionary brother poured out his heart to me. Christmas is especially bad, he said. That’s the hardest. Once I was invited to spend Christmas with a family, but after I got there I wished I had never gone. I felt like they were just trying to do me a favor. I felt like an intruder. Next Christmas, I drove off in my car far away, rented a motel room, and sat there and cried. {15}

The courage to be single (and I realize that marriage requires its kind of courage too) is not just found among missionaries. Many young men and women in more ordinary circumstances have made incredibly hard decisions to avoid a marriage they at first thought was right. Elva McAllaster writes a whole chapter on such stories under the title *The Courage to Stay Single*. For example:

Mara had the courage. She was already wearing a diamond when she began to realize that Larry’s moods were

so unpredictable that, in spite of all the qualities for which she adored him, he was not good husband material. Nor was he ready to be a father. She thought of his moods-those black moods-and she shuddered, and stood by her courage. {16}

Mervin had courage, too. He was already engaged, as a matter of fact, when he began to feel ominous intensities of penned-in and nailed-down limitation. He knew it would make him feel like sixteen varieties of a heel to break the engagement, but he knew increasingly that Erma was wrong for him. Wrong, wrong, wrong. When Erma nervously wanted the wedding to be sooner than they had first planned, her insecurity liberated Mervin's emotions, and his emotions liberated his whole future-as he would now describe it. {17}

The point is this: singleness has been a noble and courageous path for ministry ever since Jesus and the Apostle Paul chose it "because of the kingdom of heaven." It is no sign of weakness to want to be married. It is normal, and it is good. The courage comes when you sense God calling you to singleness (for this chapter of your life) and you accept the call with zeal and creative planning for His glory.

V. The Apostle Paul calls singleness a gift from God.

"I wish that all men were [single] as I am. But each man has his own gift from God; one has this gift, another has that" (1 Corinthians 7:7). In essence, Jesus pointed to the same thing in Matthew 19:12 when He said, "The one who can accept this should accept it."

With the gift comes the grace to be chaste. Margaret Clarkson is right: "His commands are his enablings." She reminds the single person, after dealing with her own single sexuality for more than forty years, that chastity is not only commanded but possible, year after year, as a gift from God. She quotes John White's *Eros Defiled* to make the point:

Just as the fasting person finds he no longer wishes for food while the starving person is tortured by mental visions of it, so some are able to experience the peace of sexual abstinence when they need to. Others are tormented. Everything depends upon their mindset or attitude. The slightest degree of ambivalence or double-mindedness spells ruin.

I cannot stress this principle enough. Neither hunger for food nor hunger for sex increases automatically until we explode into uncontrollable behavior. Rather, it is as though a spring is wound up, locked in place, ready to be released when the occasion arises. And should that occasion not arise (and here I refer especially to sex), I need experience no discomfort. {18}

Single people do not always discover singleness as a gift at the beginning of their journey. Ada Lum admits that it was a process for her to come to this place:

For a long time I did not consider that my single status was a gift from the Lord. I did not resent it-to be frank, in my earlier idealistic period I thought that because I had chosen singleness I was doing God a favor! But in later years I was severely tested again and again on that choice. Then, through Paul's words and life and my subsequent experiences, it gently dawned on me that God had given me a superb gift! {19}

But single people are not generally treated as the bearers of a superb and special gift from God. They are sometimes treated as abnormal in the church. Perhaps the only text people can think of is Genesis 2:18, "It is not good for the man to be alone." Conclusion: singleness is not good. Trevor Douglas candidly describes the cost of being a single man in this kind of atmosphere:

Jesus admitted that singleness is costly, so much so that not everyone can endure it. The obvious cost is the attitude that single men might be gay, or at least slightly strange, and perhaps anti-female. Our North American society is structured definitely for couples. Not so the tribe of Ayangan Ifugaos among whom I work. Although 99 percent of the men are married, they don't look at the one percent as weird. The social cost only hits me when I return home-in the churches, among Christians, who, of all people, should know better. {20}

Well, is it good or not good to be alone? If it is not good---not God's will---how can it be called a "gift from God"? How could Jesus, who never sinned, have chosen it for Himself? How could Paul say it was a great asset for ministry?

Two answers: First, Genesis 2:18 was a statement about man before the fall. Perhaps, if there had been no fall, there would have been no singleness. {21} Everyone would have had a perfectly compatible personality type for someone; people and situations would have matched up perfectly; no sin would have made us blind or gullible or hasty; and no great commission---no lostness, no famine, no sickness, no misery---would call for extraordinary measures of sacrifice in marriage and singleness. But that is not our world. So sometimes-many times---it is good for a person to be alone.

But second, almost no one has to be really alone. That's the point of the next thesis. But let me include here another insight from another single person who read this foreword:

I believe that Genesis 2:18 extends beyond the principle of marriage. As a general rule, it is definitely not good for man (or woman) to be alone. God created us to function within relationships. Most of the time, it will not be necessary for the single person to be alone, even though the marriage relationship does not exist. Many married people are very much alone emotionally. Sometimes marriage keeps one from being alone, but not always.

VI. Jesus promises that forsaking family for the sake of the kingdom will be repaid with a new family, the church.

“I tell you the truth, no one who has left home or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or fields for me and the gospel will fail to receive a hundred times as much in this present age (homes, brothers, sisters, mothers, children and fields---and with them, persecutions) and in the age to come, eternal life” (Mark 10:29-30). Many singles have discovered these hundreds of family members in the body of Christ. It is often not their fault when they haven't. But many have. Margaret Clarkson's large-hearted book, *So You're Single*, is even dedicated TO MY MARRIED FRIENDS whose love and friendship have so enriched my life. She obviously found a “family” in many of the families in her life.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer, the German pastor who was hanged for conspiring to assassinate Hitler, was single. He knew the needs of single people for family, and was moved, in large measure for this reason, to write his little book, *Life Together*. He said simply, the single person “needs another Christian who speaks God's Word to him.” {22} That is what the church is for.

Elisabeth Elliot comes at this need for family from another side, and asks, “How may a single woman enter into the meaning of motherhood if she can have no children?” She answers:

She can have children! She may be a spiritual mother, as was Amy Carmichael, by the very offering of her singleness, transformed for the good of far more children than a natural mother may produce. All is received and made holy by the One to whom it is offered. {23}

This ideal is not a reality for many singles. But Jesus had a great vision of hundreds of wonderful relationships growing up in the lives of single people who choose the kingdom road of obedient singleness rather than accepting marriage from an unbeliever. We who are leaders in the churches should open our eyes to make the same discovery that Frank Schneider made:

For the first time in years of Christian service, we were aware of an affluence of intelligent, capable, loyal, energetic, talented single adults who only wanted someone to care enough to recognize they exist. Some lonely, some deeply hurt, others very self-sufficient and quite in control, but all desiring fellowship in a Christian atmosphere where they can feel they belong. {24}

VII. God is sovereign over who gets married and who doesn't. And He can be trusted to do what is good for

those who hope in Him.

Job speaks not just for those who had and lost, but also for those who never had, when he says, "Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked I will depart. The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away; may the name of the Lord be praised" (Job 1:21). God rules in these affairs, and we will be the happier when we bow before His inscrutable ways and confess, ". . . no good thing does he withhold from those whose walk is blameless" (Psalm 84:11). "He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all-how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?" (Romans 8:32).

Margaret Clarkson's personal statement of submission rings with the strength that comes from bowing before the sovereignty of God:

Through no fault or choice of my own, I am unable to express my sexuality in the beauty and intimacy of Christian marriage, as God intended when he created me a sexual being in his own image. To seek to do this outside of marriage is, by the clear teaching of Scripture, to sin against God and against my own nature. As a committed Christian, then, I have no alternative but to live a life of voluntary celibacy. I must be chaste not only in body, but in mind and spirit as well. Since I am now in my 60's I think that my experience of what this means is valid. I want to go on record as having proved that for those who are committed to do God's will, his commands are his enablings. . . .

My whole being cries out continually for something I may not have. My whole life must be lived in the context of this never-ceasing tension. My professional life, my social life, my personal life, my Christian life---all are subject to its constant and powerful pull. As a Christian I have no choice but to obey God, cost what it may. I must trust him to make it possible for me to honor him in my singleness.

That this is possible, a mighty cloud of witnesses will join me to attest. Multitudes of single Christians in every age and circumstance have proved God's sufficiency in this matter. He has promised to meet our needs and he honors his word. If we seek fulfillment in him, we shall find it. It may not be easy, but whoever said that Christian life was easy? The badge of Christ's discipleship was a cross.

Why must I live my life alone? I do not know. But Jesus Christ is Lord of my life. I believe in the sovereignty of God, and I accept my singleness from his hand. He could have ordered my life otherwise, but he has not chosen to do so. As his child, I must trust his love and wisdom. {25}

Ann Kiemel Anderson gave poetic expression to what thousands of Christian singles have discovered about the relationship of desire for marriage and devotion to a sovereign God:

Jesus, if this is Your will,

then YES to being single.

In my deepest heart, i want to marry,
to belong to a great man;
to know that i am linked to his life . . .
and he to mine . . .
following Christ and our dreams together . . .
but You know what i need.
if i never marry, it is YES to You. {26}

VIII. Mature manhood and womanhood are not dependent on being married.

This is why the rest of this book is relevant for single people, even when it is dealing with marriage. The question every man and woman should ask earnestly is this: “What does it mean to be a woman and not a man?” Or: “What does it mean to be a man and not a woman? What is my masculine or feminine personhood (not just anatomy and physiology)?” We are persuaded from Scripture that masculinity and femininity are rooted in who we are by nature. They are not simply reflexes of a marriage relationship. Man does not become man by getting married. Woman does not become woman by getting married.

But it is clear that the form that a man’s leadership, provision, and protection take varies with the kind of relationship a man has with a woman---from the most intimate relationship of marriage to the most casual relationship with a stranger on the street. And the form that a woman’s affirmation of that leadership takes will also vary according to the relationship. Mature femininity does not express itself in the same way toward every man. A mature woman who is not married, for example, does not welcome the same kind of strength and leadership from other men that she would welcome from her husband. But she will affirm the strength and leadership of men in some form in all her relationships with worthy men. I know this will need a lot of explanation. That is what I try to do in Chapter 1.

The point here is simply to stress that for single people sexual personhood counts. It does not first emerge in marriage. No one is ready for marriage who has not discovered in practical ways how to live out his mature masculinity or her mature femininity. Paul Jewett is right:

Sexuality permeates one’s individual being to its very depth; it conditions every facet of one’s life as a person. As the self is always aware of itself as an “I,” so this “I” is always aware of itself as himself or herself. Our self-knowledge is indissolubly bound up not simply with our human being but with our sexual being. At the human

level there is no “I and thou” per se, but only the “I” who is male or female confronting the “thou,” the “other,” who is also male or female. {27}

This is not dependent on marriage. Ada Lum illustrates this for single women:

At any age the single woman needs to respect herself as a sexual being whom God created. She is not less sexual for not being married. Sex has to do with biological drive for union with one of the opposite sex. Sexuality has to do with our whole personhood as a woman or a man. It has to do with the ways we express ourselves in relation to others. It has to do with being warm, understanding, receptive sexual beings when we relate to another female or to a child or to a man who is the least prospect for a husband! . . . I try to treat him as I do my two brothers. I enjoy Leon and Dick. I respect them. I like to hear them talk about masculine things in masculine ways. I am pleased when they treat me thoughtfully. . . . With care and discretion a single woman can and should be a real woman to the men around her. {28}

Cheryl Forbes gives another illustration of one kind of feminine expression as a single person:

To be single is not to forego the traditional “womanly” pursuits. Whether you live alone or with a husband and children, a house or apartment is still a home that requires “homemaking.” And marital status has nothing to do with the desire for warm, comfortable, aesthetically pleasing surroundings. God gave each of us a desire for beauty; it is part of our desire for him, who is loveliness incarnate. Why should a single woman reject that part of her image as a creature of God? . . . I am a better and more imaginative cook now than I was five years ago. I am free to experiment on myself and my friends. I have the time and the money to entertain people around the dinner table, something I might not want or be able to do if I cooked for a family three times a day every day. {29}

The point is that, married or single, your manhood or your womanhood matters. You dishonor yourself and your Maker if you disregard this profound dimension of your personhood. Our culture is pressing us on almost every side to discount this reality and think of ourselves and each other merely in terms of a set of impersonal competencies and gender-blind personality traits. It has the appearance of promoting justice. But the failure to take into account the profound and complementary differences of masculine and feminine personhood is like assigning a truck driver the task of writing the choreography for two ballet artists.

Our prayer is that God will give to millions of single Christians in our day a deep understanding and appreciation for their own distinct sexual personhood, that Christ will be magnified more and more in you as you offer His gift of singleness back to Him in radical freedom from the way of the world, and that you will grow deeper and deeper in joyful devotion (on the Calvary road) to the triumphant cause of Jesus Christ.

I close this foreword with a final word of hope from a woman of deep insight and long singleness. Margaret

Clarkson looks back over a lifetime of singleness and extends a hand to those just starting:

When Christian was crossing the River at the close of Pilgrim's Progress, his heart failed him for fear. He began to sink in the cold, dark waters. But Hopeful, his companion, helped him to stand, calling out loudly, "Be of good cheer, my brother; I feel the bottom, and it is good." Then Christian recovered his faith, and passed safely through the waters to the Celestial City.

If there are singles who find the waters of singleness dark and deep, who feel, "I sink in deep waters; the billows go over my head; all his waves go over me," this is my message to you concerning singleness: "Be of good cheer, my brother, my sister; I feel the bottom, and it is good." {30}

Endnotes to Foreword

{1} Margaret Clarkson, *So You're Single* (Wheaton, IL: Harold Shaw, 1978), p. 10.

{2} If you wonder why I quote more women singles than men in what follows, the answer is that there are probably six times as many ministering single women in the church and missions than single men. I base this on a survey taken in the late eighties of nineteen major mission agencies representing 20,333 missionaries. It showed that 16 percent (3,320) were unmarried. Of those, 15 percent were unmarried men. The unmarried women outnumbered the unmarried men in missions six to one. Howard Erickson, "Single Missionary Survey", *Fundamentalist Journal*, vol. 8, no. 1 (January 1989), p. 27. The women have certainly written more about their experience.

{3} Trevor Douglas, "Wanted! More Single Men," *Evangelical Missions Quarterly*, vol. 24, no. 1 (January 1988), pp. 64-65.

{4} John Piper, "Condom Ads Will Promote Promiscuity, Not Good Health," *Minneapolis Star-Tribune*, February 21, 1987.

{5} This is an understated paraphrase from memory.

{6} Luci Swindoll, *Wide My World Narrow My Bed* (Portland, OR: Multnomah Press, 1982).

{7} Cheryl Forbes, "Let's Not Shackle the Single Life," *Christianity Today*, vol. 23, no. 10 (February 16, 1979), pp. 18-19.

{8} Rhena Taylor, *Single and Whole* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1984), p. 71.

{9} Douglas, "Wanted! More Single Men," pp. 65-66.

{10} *Ibid.*, p. 66.

{11} Ada Lum, *Single and Human* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1976), p. 34.

{12} Ruth Tucker, *Guardians of the Great Commission: The Story of Women in Modern Missions* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1988), p. 84.

{13} *Ibid.*, p. 40.

{14} Elisabeth Elliot, "Virginity," *Elisabeth Elliot Newsletter*, March/April 1990 (Ann Arbor: Servant Publications), p. 1.

{15} Douglas, "Wanted! More Single Men," p. 63.

{16} Elva McAllaster, *Free to Be Single* (Chappaqua, NY: Christian Herald Books, 1979), p. 49.

{17} *Ibid.*, pp. 50-51.

{18} John White, *Eros Defiled* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1977), p. 22. Quoted in Clarkson, "Singleness: His Share for Me," *Christianity Today*, Vol. 23, no. 10, February 16, 1979. p. 15.

{19}Lum, *Single and Human*, p. 22.

{20}Douglas, "Wanted! More Single Men," p. 63.

{21}Margaret Clarkson has no doubts in her own mind after six decades of singleness: "I may not blame my singleness on God. Singleness, like homosexuality, suffering, death, and all else that is less than perfect in this world, was not God's original plan for his creation. It was one of the many results of man's fall." Thus Jesus' singleness would not be sin but a participation in the calamities of the fallen world, like his mortality. "Singleness: His Share for Me," *Christianity Today*, vol. 23, no. 10, February 16, 1979, p. 15.

{22}Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Life Together*, trans. John W. Doherty (New York: Harper and Row, 1945), p. 23.

{23}Elliot, "Virginity," p. 3.

{24}Edward F. and Gwen Weising, *Singleness: An Opportunity for Growth and Fulfillment* (Springfield, MO: Gospel Publishing House, 1982), pp. 5-6.

{25}Clarkson, "Singleness: His Share for Me," pp. 14-15.

{26}Ann Kiemel Anderson, *I Gave God Time* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House, 1982), p. 20.

{27}Paul King Jewett, *Man as Male and Female* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1975), p. 172.

{28}Lum, *Single and Human*, pp. 44-45.

{29}Forbes, "Let's Not Shackle the Single Life," p. 17.

{30} Clarkson, So You're Single, p. 11.

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