



Christian and Single - What Does Life Look Like?

Isaiah 30:18: (NASB) *Therefore the LORD longs to be gracious to you, and therefore He waits on high to have compassion on you. For the LORD is a God of justice; how blessed are all those who long for Him.*



“When I grow up I want to get married and be a mom or be a dad!” For many of us there are simple dreams in life that germinate in childhood. As we grow they blossom into clear and exciting expectations. This expectation of growing up and getting married is so basic and so obvious that we rarely entertain the thought of it NOT happening. What if you grow through life and come to the time when this simple and expected event is supposed to happen...and it does not? What if you spend your life being single? There are those

who say that remaining unmarried can be amazing and awesome, and that is great. It can also be a turbulent, discouraging and derailing experience that overshadows and overwhelms adulthood. How do single Christians find their way to not only coping with this “single” challenge but living their lives with contentment, clarity and conviction?

We would like to welcome Julie from our CQ team to be our specific voice in this podcast. Julie did a lot of communicating with our three main sources who share their personal experience: one a 30-something Christian woman named Anne who is honestly and deeply in the throes of the challenges that a single life can bring. The other source is a 59-year-old Christian woman named Linnet who has weathered that same storm and come through it stronger and more focused. We also sought wise advice from a 50-year-old friend named Joy. (For their privacy, we have changed the names of the women.)

Let’s set up the issues:



Julie from the CQ team: (Comments in pink) We want to acknowledge that although we discussed the subject with three Christian women, this issue also very much applies to men. People may be unmarried, divorced or widowed and in many ways, this is a secret problem that most of us have no idea about, but being single can be a difficult path. When it IS discussed, it is often in the context of “when you won’t be single anymore.” For those of us who are married, this was eye-opening about how we can best support our single friends and family in the ways most helpful to them.

The individuals that helped us by sharing their stories, poured out their personal experiences and gave us permission to share them with you.

On a personal note, I did not get married until I was 30 and I remember the anxiety that being single caused and a lot of it was societal. I recall buying a home at age 23, happily signing mortgage papers like a grown up, only to see the paperwork label me as a “spinster” after my name. If I was a male it would have said, “Unmarried.” At age 23, society already put me in a gray bun, rocking in a chair with 50 cats.



Prayer. What should our prayer life look like and consist of?

Let's get started with a premise understood by all three of our friends: When we interviewed the three women, all of them quoted Psalms 37:4-5. Getting married surely is a godly and appropriate desire.

Psalms 37:4-5: (NASB) ⁴Delight yourself in the LORD; and He will give you the desires of your heart. ⁵Commit your way to the LORD, trust also in Him, and He will do it.

John 15:7: (NASB) *If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you.*

Does NOT receiving this or that desire put us into the category of asking amiss?

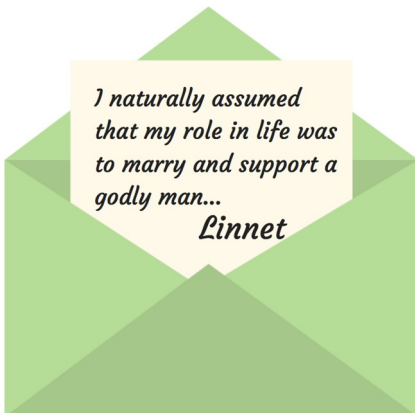
James 4:2-3: (NASB) ²You do not have because you do not ask. ³You ask and do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, so that you may spend it on your pleasures.

Anne, our 30-something, had this to say: *One of my desires is to have a partner to serve the Lord with and to share that love with our children. I can remember, even as a little girl, wanting to be a wife and mother. I believe that is a godly desire. I pray that if it's not God's will to bless me with a husband, that He remove or refocus this desire in me. That He fills my heart with contentment in serving Him and others differently. If there is a man designed for me, I pray that God works in me to make me the woman designed for that man. And that the experiences I'm going through now will help mold me into a more compassionate and loving person and better partner. It would be a lot easier knowing which one to be praying for! For the man to come or to refocus the desire. And then I have to remind myself, that's where faith comes in.*



One of my desires is to have a partner to serve the Lord with and to share that love...

Anne



I naturally assumed that my role in life was to marry and support a godly man...

Linnet

Linnet (our 59-year-old) grew up in a house full of laughter, and her Christian parents worked together toward a common goal of having their home open for people to visit - whether for days or years. She says, *I naturally assumed that my role in life was to marry and support a godly man in our mutual vision of God's will for our lives. Whenever anyone asked me what I wanted to be, I would always answer, "a mom" and thought that 10 kids would be my perfect future. We make plans, God changes them. As I grew older, I discovered that no men in my church shared my vision of being happily married to me with 10 children in a home which was always open to others. As many girls do, I looked for a younger version of my father, but did not find him.*



After a bad experience of being engaged to a man who was clearly not “the one,” Linnet went on to talk about what went on in her 20s, 30s and 40s. *My birthdays started having more and more candles on the cake, and I began to realize that my child-bearing years were not as many as they had been. Eventually, I began to look to the Lord and said, “I am willing to not have children if that is what You think is best.” I still wanted a husband. I prayed to God and asked Him for a husband, but He did not answer my prayers in the time frame and with the answer that I was expecting.*

We see this as development and potential growth but still setting expectations.

What is interesting when you read the complete stories of all three women is that they start out with a long list of what they want in a man and as the years go by, they scratch off many things on their list.

Please see bonus material for the complete stories from our three sources.

I kept looking for a godly husband, and along the way made a couple of bad mistakes. At that point, I told God that I was done with doing His will my way. I wanted Him to do His will His way, and I would no longer seek for a husband. If He wanted me to have one, He was going to have to bring that man to me and make it very plain to me that this was His will. I realized so thoroughly that I had been looking at love and marriage as emotions, and not as principles and commitment.

Focal Point Resolve

Prayer. As a single Christian, let my prayer life be rich in honesty regarding my deep human desires and overflowing in desire and faith to unfold my “Thy will be done in me.”

Jonathan: You know, Rick and Julie, Jewel and I did not get married until Jewel was 29, and I know it was challenging for her to be single. I asked her if she would tell us a little about her experience.



Jewel from the CQ team: Well, back then, my sister, all my friends and my cousins were all married. People seemed to get married younger than they do now. I was determined to marry someone who held my same Christian goals and ideals. This limited my options, but I know it was right. I came to the conclusion that I was probably going to be alone and needed to support myself, so I went back to college to become a Dental Hygienist instead of remaining a Dental Assistant. But because my time, money and decisions were my own, I was able to travel and attend church functions in Europe and throughout the United States. When I was lonely, I would host dinners and Bible studies in my home. Even though I often was the only single one at the table, I was determined not to let it stop me from serving the Lord in ways I enjoyed.

Jewel, do you have any advice for those in that same situation?



Well, my advice is, do not isolate yourself from others because you are by yourself. And pray! I not only prayed for God’s will in the matter, but I prayed I could accept His will, whatever it was. I thought about the Scripture where God gives you the desires of your heart. The Lord knew I desired to be married, but I also understood that God knew what was best for me. We can desire things in life that may not be for our best welfare. Because *God knows all*, we need to trust Him.

Jesus’ own prayer helps us see the appropriate mix of honest desire and humble acquiescence:

Luke 22:41-42: (KJV) ⁴¹And he was withdrawn from them about a stone's cast, and kneeled down, and prayed, ⁴²Saying, Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless, not my will, but thine, be done.

“God will give you the desires of your heart.” In the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus prayed with deepest earnestness. He asked God, *Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless, not my will, but thine, be done.* God did not remove the cup from him. Are we saying Jesus was praying amiss? NO! God had a different plan.

The bottom line of prayer is, if you are a Christian the greater *desire of your heart* is to serve God. If He has you serve Him in a different path than you imagined, He IS giving you *the desire of your heart*.

Prayer sets the table, but how do Christian singles cope with the embedded everyday life challenges?

Everyday life is where we are made or broken. The subliminal challenges, the natural suggestions and reminders of ours being a “couples-driven society” cannot be underestimated. Those of us who are married have NO IDEA how this works and how difficult this can be for those who are not!



Practical Everyday Life.
What are the pitfalls,
challenges and temptations?



Julie: More from our sources...this is where those of us who are married and mean well need to listen closely. Let’s start with Joy, who is 50, explaining what she goes through: *Being single is sometimes considered a shameful thing in our society. It is not easy, especially when you grow up on fairy tales and imagine a romantic life with a wonderful husband. It’s hard to explain to co-workers why you don’t date people who do not have the same Christian values as you. So, it is societally awkward. They say, “You’ve never been married? Never had kids?” (pause) “Sorry.” It’s only the divorced friends who say, “We should all be like you. You were smart.” (I’m always sad that it didn’t work out for them).*





So, Rick and Jonathan, I thought it would be helpful to do some role playing. I am going to play the part of Anne, who is a beautiful girl inside and out. I have given you a list of things well-intentioned people have lovingly said to her, and then I will tell you how she REALLY would like to respond to them. Instead of being encouraging, these end up hurting and causing doubt.

- ⌚ Do not worry. God will grant you the desires of your heart (Psalm 37:4). *Is this NOT a godly desire? Am I being selfish in wanting to be a wife and mother? Am I not serving the Lord correctly? How do I change the desires of my heart?*
- ⌚ I know the secret, Anne. It will happen when you stop wanting it! *Yes, I know God gives us experiences we don't want, but does He actually give people spouses when they truly don't want one? Really?*
- ⌚ I know the Lord has someone special for you. *Really? How? I don't, and I've been praying about this for a while, a long while. Am I just not trusting enough? What if God is telling me "No" - not wait? That is not helpful. It is getting my hopes up.*
- ⌚ Anne, you will be a wonderful wife and/or mother! *Thank you, but not helpful. If God has given me these gifts and characteristics and no husband or children, what does that mean? I'm still waiting to see how He wants me to use these gifts. Are you saying I can only use them in the capacities as a wife and a mother?*
- ⌚ You are already married to Jesus. *Yes, I am, and that relationship is my priority! But, it doesn't take away my desire to have an earthly marriage and partner to serve God with. And some days, as much as I love Jesus, his not being able to physically hold me or wipe away my tears is difficult.*
- ⌚ Anne, why are you still single? *Why indeed? I don't know?! Given a choice, it's currently not my preference.*

It is difficult to encourage someone who is in this situation when they do not want to be.

Let's take a look at some scriptural principles to cope with practical everyday life issues.

Feeling judged or categorized can bring us down the road of doing the same thing in return. Two wrongs never have made a right:

James 4:11,12-17: (NASB) ¹¹Do not speak against one another, brethren. He who speaks against a brother or judges his brother, speaks against the law and judges the law... ¹²but who are you who judge your neighbor?

Be careful with your words. They can uplift, or they can destroy.



Embrace the awkwardness of being single surrounded by couples and find opportunities to spend time in groups with others who are single. Don't lock yourself away from life and its experiences. Give God space to work!

As we go about our life plans, care needs to be taken to see them through the highest perspective:

¹³Come now, you who say, Today or tomorrow we will go to such and such a city and spend a year there and engage in business and make a profit. ¹⁴Yet you do not know what your life will be like tomorrow. You are just a vapor that appears for a little while and then vanishes away.



For a single Christian, acknowledging and following this higher perspective can be elusive as we are SO naturally wired to see and want a specific outcome:

¹⁵Instead, you ought to say, If the Lord wills, we will live and also do this or that. ¹⁶But as it is, you boast in your arrogance; all such boasting is evil. ¹⁷Therefore, to one who knows the right thing to do and does not do it, to him it is sin.

We went over a lot of phrases well-intentioned people may offer as consolation and encouragement, but here is what Anne says would be better received and helpful:

How to think when encouraging your single friends:

- ♥ *Put yourself in their shoes. Does the question you are going to ask or statement you are going to make about their single status have the potential to cause pain? Is the answer even any of your business?*
- ♥ *Be someone they can share this struggle with. Listen. Let them vent. Let them cry. Remember, when you're single you don't always have someone to come home to and talk with.*
- ♥ *Offer to pray with them. Especially if they do share with you. Pray together in THAT moment, with specifics! And then continue to pray for them.*
- ♥ *Spend time with them. One-on-one and in larger groups, not always focused on couples or things where you have to pair up or split in half.*
- ♥ *Remind them they are NOT alone! Remind them again. And again. Have you reminded them lately?*



God's love IS the greatest you will ever know! It's the only TRUE LOVE we can experience. Don't look to or rely on others for your happiness.



Focal Point Resolve



Practical Everyday Life. As a single Christian, see each day and experience as God sees them. He sets them before you in such a way to stretch you upward towards his face.

Instagram quote: What may seem like a disappointment could be God setting you up for a rescue. Trust His plan even though you do not understand the path.

Isaiah 41:10: (NASB) *Do not fear, for I am with you; do not anxiously look about you, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, surely, I will help you, surely, I will uphold you with My righteous right hand.*

The greatest desire of any Christian's heart is to do the will of God. So much of how we cope depends on where we look.

**Everyday life has its practical everyday solutions -
what about finding and focusing on your purpose?**

For a single Christian, just getting through your days will - well - just get you through your days. While struggling to do this it becomes evermore important to have your larger purpose always before your mind. Given time, the presence of a larger purpose inevitably redirects your every day.



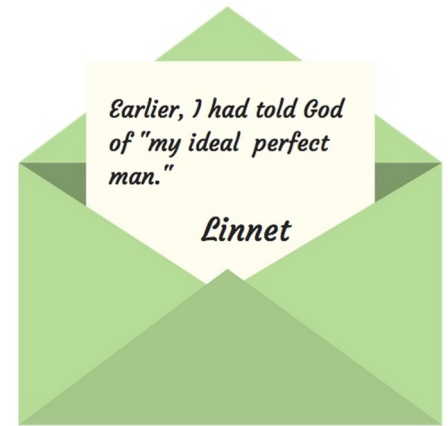
**Purpose:
Finding, holding and
accomplishing your purpose**

Let me tell you a little bit about Linnet. She is attractive, very witty, smart and knows her Bible inside and out. She is outgoing and is willing to help others at great personal sacrifice. You know how some people do things begrudgingly? Well, she serves others with joy and passion. She is an amazing person to know.

It is interesting that as we get to the category of "purpose" that our more mature friend, Linnet, was able to really look back and see how the Lord has led her. She decided it was going to be purely God's will and God's way. She would no longer be seeking a husband.



Dropping back in on her story: *Earlier, I had told God of "my ideal perfect man." I was sure that if such a man loved me that I would never ask God for anything else. In God's own miraculous and unexpected way - and in His own time - I received the close bond of friendship with a person who is exactly what I had described to God in my prayer. It is not romantic love. It is a bond on a spiritual level. It will never lead to marriage or anything more than friendship - and I don't want it to. This is what surprises me the most. I am completely content to be single. I feel that this is the way God answered my prayer.*



There is obviously a growth process here. She is now older, wiser and more accepting. God granted her the desire of her heart in a way she was not expecting.

He did not answer my prayer overnight or even over the span of 10 years. It was through the mountain tops and the valleys of life's journey, filled with disappointments and broken hopes and dreams. Finally, in my late 40s or early 50s I began to understand that God's will for my life really was best. I quit looking. I quit being discontent! I started finding reasons to enjoy being single.



This reminds me of how you ask for a present and the wrapping paper is not as you expected. The bows are the wrong color, but it is still a gift.

Linnet's joys and blessings of being single:

- 1) I was able to be with my father through his end-of-life experiences. So many married women move away from their family and cannot be there for their parents except for short visits.*
- 2) I have had wonderful times with my mom as she ages. We travel together, study together, discuss things together and are the closest of friends. I would have missed this privilege if I had to live far from her.*
- 3) I have been able to continue my parents' legacy of serving God by serving His children in the day-to-day aspects of life. I would not have found this avenue of service without their help.*

These first three gems of life she found have to do with her parents. That is powerful. Many times people get married and start their own lives, and the lives of those who gave them life end up getting put in the background.

She is mature enough to take these experiences and blessings as from the Lord.

- 4) This once rebellious and frequently disobedient child has learned to trust and obey. Maybe I should say "is learning to trust and obey." It is a long process - but I do want to trust and obey God. I want to serve Him in every aspect of my life, including trusting His plan for my life without trying to change it.*



5) *I am able to live my financial values - to give as I think the Lord would approve, to avoid large debt, to travel, learn languages, and to become close to people without a husband having the right of headship to go against my understanding of how God wants me to live.*

These are all-important life lessons for every Christian. Accepting and absorbing your purpose comes from being willing to acquiesce to God's will.

We have listeners all over the world and we realize the concept of marriage is different. While being single may not be everyone's specific problem, the scriptural principle of contentment of whatever state you are in applies to everyone.

Joy (our 50-year-old) is amazing. She is so talented. She paints, plays music, has a very wide range of interests and rarely stops smiling. She is warm and someone you just automatically want to be with.

Joy adds: *I look at so many marriages, even those evenly yoked and see a fair share of problems. It helps to know that while there are problems being single, there are also issues for those married "in the Lord." I think that it's better to be single than in an unhappy marriage. I embrace my freedom. If I want to plan a trip, I don't have to consult with anyone except God. If I want to purchase something, the choice is mine. If I want to take up painting, no one minds!*



There are always issues no matter what pathway we are on.

Now for a great scriptural example of finding purpose: God told Moses he was chosen to lead Israel, but he first had to absorb his purpose and the tools of that purpose.

In our next verses, Moses is speaking with God through the burning bush:

Exodus 4:1-2: (NASB) ¹Then Moses said, What if they will not believe me or listen to what I say? For they may say, The LORD has not appeared to you. ²The LORD said to him, What is that in your hand? And he said, A staff.

Moses had the tool in his hand already, but he was still afraid.



Sometimes a single Christian struggles so hard in their everyday that they do not see their purpose.

As a Christian, you may already have the staff in your hand; you just need to talk to God and have Him show you how to use the tool you already have.



It is difficult not to compromise or to settle when you feel alone. Acknowledge that and still stand firm!

For Moses, it was enough that he had been given his staff as his symbol of God's presence and authority.

Now God wanted him to be a mouthpiece as well! God ASSURED Moses he could do it!

Exodus 4:10-12: (NASB) ¹⁰Then Moses said to the LORD, Please, Lord, I have never been eloquent, neither recently nor in time past, nor since You have spoken to Your servant; for I am slow of speech and slow of tongue. ¹¹The LORD said to him, Who has made man's mouth?... Is it not I, the LORD? ¹²Now then go, and I, even I, will be with your mouth, and teach you what you are to say.



Sometimes a single Christian doubts their ability to go it alone in spite of God's assurance.

Moses pleaded in his insecurity and God helped him to accept a way to accomplish his purpose. That way was his brother Aaron - his co-laborer in life would now be his co-laborer in God's purpose!

Exodus 4:13-15: (NASB) ¹³But he said, Please, Lord, now send the message by whomever You will. ¹⁴Then the anger of the LORD burned against Moses, and He said, Is there not your brother Aaron the Levite? I know that he speaks fluently.... ¹⁵You are to speak to him and put the words in his mouth; and I, even I, will be with your mouth and his mouth, and I will teach you what you are to do.



Sometimes a single Christian needs to co-labor, to find mutual godly purpose with a friend and go!

God gave Moses help, but He did not let Moses rely on a spouse; He had him rely on a co-laborer. If you are single and God is giving you something to do that feels too big, find a co-laborer.

Be the Moses of your own life, of your own purpose. Use what is in your hand and move forward.

Think about opportunities where you can do more for the Lord and others. And go do it! Spend time working on your relationship with your heavenly Father and the others He has brought into your life.





Focal Point Resolve

Focus on your godly purpose and it will prevail in your practical everyday life!

Matthew 6:33: (NASB) *But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.*

**Prayer guides our practical life. Purpose gives it direction.
What about a single Christian's passion?**

For many single Christians, the 800-pound gorilla in the room is passion. Intimacy. Such longing cannot be simply halted, but its energy can be redirected. Think of a space capsule orbiting the moon. The pull of the moon's gravity gives it the energy to break free of that orbit and catapult towards earth, its rightful home. We need to think of ourselves in that type of a situation. We have the physical earthly passions of life. They do not just shut off.

The event, *Suddenly Single*

- In my late 20s, I was unable to find anyone. I started to think that perhaps this was the Lord's will for me - to remain single. One day when I was particularly depressed, I suddenly realized I had two choices: either remain miserable or make the conscious decision to find happiness in being by myself. From that moment on, I began to deliberately look for positive aspects to being single - my time, money and decisions were my own, and I had the freedom to do as I wished. Ironically, soon after I hit my "singleness stride," I met my husband in my 30s and everything changed dramatically as I shifted into a new stage of my life. Being married was an adjustment and required just as much conscious decision-making to blend with someone and find happiness in sharing all aspects of my life with him. However, after nine years of marriage, and not by my choice, we are in the process of divorcing, and my status has changed to "suddenly single."*



This is another dimension of being Christian and single. This is not by choice and is a painful challenge. You can also be suddenly single because your spouse passed away.

For more on grief, please see March 5, 2018, CQ Episode 723: "How Do You Find Your Way Through Grief?"



Passions:
Our earthly passions and desires.



The unmarried who are striving to follow biblical principles may feel they are "missing out" on intimacy that was created by God as far back as Adam and Eve. We also do not want to forget those Christians struggling with their own sexuality, who cannot in good conscience be married to the opposite sex and are leading celibate lives, not acting on their passions. We have utter respect for someone fighting this fight. That is a terrific example of self-sacrifice.



One of our Facebook friends makes a comment about being single: **I struggle with it because I'm a Christian with same-sex attraction. Super lonely.**

When you see someone who has that struggle, take the time to help them, encourage them and show your support.

Quora

We asked people on Quora.com how they cope being Christian and single and got this great answer back from Robert: **Why do you have to cope at all? Just because the world 'promotes' promiscuity or immorality (true or not) doesn't mean you personally have to join in the fracas, right?**

For some of us that may be harder.

Anne is a beautiful girl inside and out. She is intelligent, well-traveled, she has her own career and her own house, she is very articulate as you can tell by the quotes she has provided for us and she loves the Lord.

On this particular topic of passion, she writes: *While morals in our society have definitely degraded, marriage and, at the very least, being part of a couple is still a focal part of it. As a woman a lot of emphasis is placed on your looks and how physically attractive you are. Be sexy, be desirable, see how this attractive man looks at the gorgeous woman using product XYZ. We're constantly marketed to with the subliminal message that you need this item to be in a relationship. Disney princesses find their Prince Charming wandering through the woods, whistling down a well, or while going about their everyday tower life. It makes finding someone seem so easy! So much in our society is structured around couples. It's often just assumed that adults will have a partner and that there's something odd, wrong, or weird about them if they don't.*



Society makes it look like this is where you should be.

A verse that has been referred to often when the discussion of marriage comes up is 1 Corinthians 7:9 from the Apostle Paul, "It's better to marry than burn with passion." So... what if you're "burning" while still trying to follow godly principles of not being intimate and there's no one to marry?



Linnet gives really good mature advice:

Don't experiment! You don't miss what you've never had. The more we live our lives in purity, the easier the lack of physical intimacy will be. And this means purity of thought, too. Don't fill your mind with desire that your body cannot enjoy in this season of life. A little curiosity is not always a good thing.

In this society we are constantly being reminded of sexuality. Linnet's advice is powerful. You don't miss what you've never had. Remember, if you are a Christian, the true desire of your heart is to do the will of God.

Let's look at a scriptural example of managing the passions of life. Israel was looking to get help from Egypt in dealing with Assyria instead of looking to God:

Isaiah 30:9-11, 18-21: (NASB) ⁹For this is a rebellious people... ¹⁰who say to the seers, you must not see visions; and to the prophets, you must not prophesy to us what is right, speak to us pleasant words, prophesy illusions. ¹¹...Turn aside from the path, let us hear no more about the Holy One of Israel.

Israel was saying, “Don't speak to us about what is right, tell us what we want to hear.” They were wanting to compromise and follow earthly desires.



Sometimes a single Christian just wants to participate with everyone else and avoid God's direction.

That is not what God's chosen people are to do.

You are NOT alone! Our Heavenly Father knows you, your heart, and is working in you and your life even when you can't see or feel Him...



Isaiah proceeds to tell Israel of their trials that will befall them if they look to their earthly neighbors for their rescue.

Isaiah then reminds them of the grace that God is waiting to shower upon them:

¹⁸Therefore the LORD longs to be gracious to you, and therefore He waits on high to have compassion on you. For the LORD is a God of justice; how blessed are all those who long for Him.¹⁹...He will surely be gracious to you at the sound of your cry; when He hears it, He will answer you.

The LORD wants to bless you. *How blessed are all those who long for Him and whose passions are turned upward. We must keep looking up.*

Israel was supposed to be separate from the world. Every time they got mixed up with the world they got messed up with the world.



Single Christians MUST look up and direct their passions upward to be blessed by God.

Continuing with Anne's advice: Talk about it. Share your struggle. Find someone to join you as a prayer warrior on this specific topic.

Our opportunity is to understand the depth of this struggle and give encouragement.

The next set of verses are powerful lessons for Israel to avoid earthly thinking and for the single Christian to avoid the temptations of their own passions.

Israel's times of difficulty and trial are temporary, and God's guidance will be revealed. He is telling them to have faith!

²⁰Although the Lord has given you bread of privation and water of oppression, He, your Teacher will no longer hide Himself, but your eyes will behold your Teacher. ²¹Your ears will hear a word behind you, This is the way, walk in it, whenever you turn to the right or to the left.

Why would God give *bread of privation and water of oppression*? Those are the tests of faithfulness to Him.



Sometimes in this fight to rightly focus passion, a single Christian feels starved and oppressed. It is in this privation that God's way will become manifest!

So, your "happily ever after" isn't. NOW what?! This goes way beyond not having a spouse or children - it applies to all of us for everything we ever felt we were entitled to or that we saw for our lives. What if the worst-case scenario happens and you do not get what you want? If things do not turn out the way the script plays out in your head? Are you going to not get out of bed? Are you going to not participate in all the wonderful things life has to offer? Do you tell God, "I don't like where this is going, so I'm no longer going to have anything to do with you?" Job's wife said to Job, "Curse God and die." Is that what you are going to do? You have to find some way to have joy in your life and it likely starts with being a blessing to others, getting the focus off of yourself and what YOU want. You can still have a BIG IMPACTFUL life.

Focal Point Resolve 

A passionate single Christian's life is defined by God's countless deliverances from earthly to spiritual thinking and actions.



Isaiah 43:1-2: (NASB) ¹But now, thus says the LORD, your Creator... I have called you by name; you are Mine! ²When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they will not overflow you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be scorched, nor will the flame burn you.

Walk through the flames of your own passions and keep looking up. God will help you. God has power, even over our own passions.

**With all of their life management tools in place,
how do single Christians graduate to genuine rest?**

The last step in this ongoing journey is the step into true restful godly peace and contentment. While taking this step is a graduation of sorts, it does not preclude the necessity to keep one's vigilant guard up and in place, because peace will be fleeting if it is not nurtured, respected and protected.

Just because we get to a place of peace does not mean we get to stay there. It requires vigilance in taking our prayer life, our practical life, our purpose and our passion in making sure those things stay in order all the time.

 **Conclusion, Suddenly Single**

- I'm trying to rediscover the mindset I had before I met my husband - the contentment I felt being single so many years ago. The two decisions are still there: I can be miserable over my new status, or I can deliberately look for the positive aspects of being single. For example, I have more time for Bible study and projects for the Lord, and I can pursue activities for personal achievement without having to worry about taking care of a spouse. Each person will have his or her own list to think about. My advice for the "originally single" people out there is to accept that this might be how the Lord wishes for you to remain - so don't be resistant to His will. Count your blessings, diligently find a way to be content with your status and wait patiently on the Lord. To those like me who find themselves "suddenly single" (and not by choice) I would say to thank the Lord for the experience of marriage in the first place and think hard about how you might have grown as a person because of it. You may also be able to help and inspire others through your difficult experience and new found single status. Now it's time to look back at your blessings list and never stop praying.*



This is a bittersweet blessing. It is an opportunity to help others.



Peace - where does it come from
and how do I keep it?

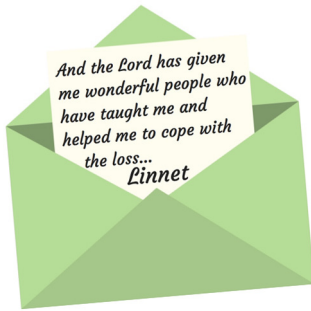


Anne sums things up with: *God doesn't promise me a spouse. He promised and already gave me a loving Savior. His love IS the greatest I will ever know!*

In her process, she is looking up. It is up to us to help her.

Find the pathway to look up and find peace to cope with the challenge of being single.

We must find the pathways of joy. Many times, the pathways start with being a blessing to others. Focus less on yourself. That is a way you can have a very impactful life, with or without a spouse.



At the sum of Linnet's life so far, here is where she has come to:

My life is filled with friends and activity. They are of all ages, from wise women in their 80s and 90s to young children just learning about life. I have no reason to ever complain. My life is full.

A quote from Christian radio has stuck with me for years: "It's better to be single wishing you were married than married wishing you were single."

I realize that being married is no guarantee of happiness. There are no guarantees that the man I might marry today would not change in the next 20 years. I was often told by kind sisters that it was better not to marry, according to the Apostle Paul. Having read through I Corinthians 7 (especially verses 29-35), though, I realized that this is only true if we devote our free time to the Lord. To be single and devote all our free time to looking for a husband, feeling sorry for ourselves, or seeing distractions in our lives is not what the Apostle had in mind.

Take the passion of your life and turn it upward. If we can learn to redirect the deepest energies of our lives, God can work amazing things through that redirected spiritual energy.

And that is the key to contentment. It is when we focus our attention on the Lord, on His plan for our lives, on His will being done through us, and on His wisdom and promises, that we no longer have the time to be focused on what we don't have. I want to be so focused on my heavenly bridegroom that I don't notice the absence of an earthly one.

This is a lifelong lesson Linnet has learned. She is rejoicing and serving with enthusiasm, gratitude and peace.

Joy says: *It doesn't work to feel sorry for yourself. I used to do that all the time. I think it just makes you less able to cope and less fun to be with. It's better to enjoy the life that God has given us to the fullest.*



Those who are married Christians need to have compassion and understand that those who are not married are in a different place. We need to reach out and be helpful to them in the right ways.



The peace of God comes from the gift of Jesus. To have the peace you must have the gift!

Hebrews 4:15-16: (NASB) ¹⁵For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin. ¹⁶Therefore let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.



Single Christians can rejoice in Jesus' understanding and accomplishment of his "single" sacrifice!

Jesus was not married. His work for God was the most important thing in his life. He went through his life single, and therefore, single-minded.



Pray and claim God's promises. I find praying the words of a specific verse really helps when I can't find the words to say. Sometimes it's as simple as saying, "Lord, you know my heart and my thoughts, help me with this struggle," or "Give me your desires."

Her desires are aligned with God's will.

Regarding Paul's thorn in the flesh - he rejoiced in grace and his lack!

2 Corinthians 12:8-10: (NASB) ⁸Concerning this I implored the Lord three times that it might leave me. ⁹And He has said to me, My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness. Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me. ¹⁰Therefore I am well content with weaknesses, with insults, with distresses, with persecutions, with difficulties, for Christ's sake; for when I am weak, then I am strong.

Paul was not praying amiss. He prayed three times and God said, "No." Jesus told him, "My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness." It will be perfected because you are weak. That is the lesson in finding peace and contentment when things may not be what you want them to be.



Single Christians, rejoice in Paul's "single" example of Jesus first, Jesus always - all by God's grace!

Count your blessings! Reflect on how God is working in your life as a single person in ways that He couldn't if you were married and enjoy these present experiences.





Focal Point Resolve



Pray always, fight through your practical life issues with the resolve derived from your godly purpose! Redirect your passion upwards and you will find peace!

Prayer, practical life, purpose and passion. All of those things bring us peace.

This is an important lesson for all of us. We all can help each other to become better Christians.

Life is not simple and for single Christians it has additional challenges.

We can all, as the body of Christ, come together and be helpful through prayer, through practical life and finding purpose, through dealing with passion, so we can get to peace. Let's join our forces according to God's will and be mutually encouraging one to another.

*So, Christian and Single - What Does Life Look Like?
For Jonathan and Rick and Christian Questions...
Think about it...!*



Join us next week for our April 2, 2018, podcast,
"Condemned to Death,
How Did Jesus Love His Enemies?"

Bonus Material

Quotes from Mandy Hale, *The Single Woman: Life, Love, and a Dash of Sass*:

Don't ignore the love you DO have in your life by focusing on the love you DON'T.

There are some places in life where you can only go alone. Embrace the beauty of your solo journey.

A season of loneliness and isolation is when the caterpillar gets its wings. Remember that next time you feel alone.



The complete letters from our three single Christian women:

One of my desires is to have a partner to serve the Lord with and to share that love with our children. I can remember wanting to be a wife and mother even as a little girl. I believe that is a godly desire.



I struggle to count all of the ways the Lord has worked in and blessed my life as a single woman (and know that I'm only even aware of a small percentage of them)! The support system He has surrounded me with through my family, friends, and church community is phenomenal! The freedoms that I enjoy as a naturally independent person with no one to consult or ask permission from are vast. I get teary-eyed when I think about all of that, and yet it still doesn't or hasn't removed my desire to share my life with someone and have a family of my own.

While I have dated and been in serious relationships, I haven't met the man the Lord designed for me. And if I'm being honest, there's a part of me hoping there's a "yet" at the end of that sentence.

As I have grown in age and as a Christian, the things I'm looking for in a man have definitely changed. My list has gotten much shorter and basically narrowed down to:

- 1) Does he love the Lord and want to serve Him first?*
- 2) Does he love me?*

Of course, finding him attractive is important too. Seeing his character and heart is more valuable than his exterior, which as handsome and good-looking as it may be is going to fade/change with age!

I pray that if it's not God's will to bless me with a husband, that He remove or refocus this desire in me. That He fills my heart with contentment in serving Him and others differently. If there is a man designed for me, I pray that God works in and on me to make me the woman designed for that man. And that the experiences I'm going through now will help mold me into a more compassionate and loving person and better partner. It would be a lot easier knowing which one to be praying for! And then I have to remind myself, that's where faith comes in.

ALL of my closest female friends are married and even those in my larger group of friends are too (I can think of only two women who are single). It can be hard to be one of or the only single person in a group of couples. A seventh or ninth or eleventh wheel isn't that different from a third wheel and sometimes feels worse! It's easy to be a part of a large group and still feel alone.

While morals in our society have definitely degraded, marriage and at the very least being part of a couple is still a focal part of it. As a woman a lot of emphasis is placed on your looks and how physically attractive you are. Be sexy, be desirable, see how this attractive man looks at the gorgeous woman using product XYZ. We're constantly marketed to with the subliminal message



that you need this item to be in a relationship. Books, movies, and songs overwhelmingly incorporate some form of relationship or struggle for it. Disney princesses find their Prince Charming wandering through the woods, whistling down a well, or while going about their everyday tower life. It makes finding someone seem so easy! So much in our society is structured around couples. It's often just assumed that adults will have a partner and that there's something odd, wrong, or weird about them if they don't (sometimes even if it's for any period of time). A quote from Oscar Wilde, "Celibacy is the only known sexual perversion" kind of summarizes that.

Within Christian circles, the social expectations to marry and have a family still feel pretty traditional. I'm in my 30's now and I've definitely seen a change in others at church from trying to be helpful and recommend set-ups to now telling me I'm too old and/or set in my independent ways to be molded into a good wife. While there aren't any women in the Bible that I'm aware of whose struggle as a single woman are shared (societal rules were different, and women needed to marry to literally survive), their struggles to become mothers were - Sarah, Hannah, Rachel, and more.

As a single woman I've lovingly and well-intentionally been told things that have made me doubt whether this desire is godly, my faith, and myself. I have to remind myself when hearing these things that they are meant to be encouraging and to look at the intent of the speaker, despite my initial reaction and hurt. The comments I've heard are bolded below with my gut reaction thought responses afterwards.

Seek God first and then He'll bring you a husband. *Does it mean I'm not seeking God because I DON'T have a husband or husband-potential man in my life? What about all of the women who obviously aren't seeking God and His ways, and ARE married? What about the amazing, godly women who are seeking Him and DON'T have husbands, but would still like one?*

God will grant you the desires of your heart (Psalms 37:4). *Is this NOT a godly desire? Am I being selfish in wanting to be a wife and mother? Am I not serving the Lord correctly? How do I change the desires of my heart?*

It'll happen when you stop wanting it. *Yes, I know God gives us experiences we don't want, but does he actually give people spouses when they truly don't want one? Really?*

A woman's heart should be so lost in God that a man has to seek God to find her. *While this sounds spiritual and encouraging and I think it's a good message, it can create a lot of doubt. Does it mean that my heart isn't lost in God? What am I doing wrong? Do I not have enough faith?*

Wait for your Boaz. *Umm... Ruth didn't wait for Boaz, she literally crawled into his bed. Yes, he was a godly man and Ruth's interactions were blessed by the Lord, but she worked for it. I know I'm not being told to jump into some distant relative's bed, right? Context!*



I know the Lord has someone special for you. Really? How? I don't, and I've been praying about this for a while, a long while. Am I just not trusting enough? What if God is telling me no, not wait?

You'll be a wonderful wife and/or mother. Thank you, but not helpful. If God has given me these gifts/characteristics and no husband or children what does that mean? I'm still waiting to see how He wants me to use these gifts. Are you saying I can only use them in these capacities?

You're already married to Jesus. Yes, I am, and that relationship is my priority! It doesn't take away my desire to have an earthly marriage and partner to serve with. And some days, as much as I love Jesus, his not being able to physically hold me or wipe away my tears is difficult.

Why are you still single? I don't know?! Given a choice, it's currently not my preference.

A verse that has been referred to often when the discussion of marriage comes up is 1 Corinthians 7:9 from Paul, "It's better to marry than burn with passion." So... what if you're "burning" while still trying to follow godly principles of not being intimate and there's no one to marry? It's not as easy as grabbing the first single guy you see and saying let's get hitched. Or something to do when you are bored, like in the Bruno Mars' song "Marry You."

There are variations on these statements and depending on the day and my mood, my reactions have definitely varied. I've been able to smile, acknowledge "that hurt a little bit, but they love me" and feel basically ok or needed to end the conversation as quickly as possible to go hide and cry, feeling like a failure as a woman and Christian with faulty faith.

Ultimately, I know that my desires to be loved and to be significant comes from God. He IS the only one who can fulfill those desires perfectly. Not a spouse, significant other, child, or any other person or relationship. God doesn't promise me a spouse. He promised and already gave me a loving savior. His love IS the greatest I will ever know!

One of the most encouraging things a dear friend shared with me when I confided this struggle to her was something her father reminded her of as she similarly struggled: "The only man good enough for you already died on a cross." That's so true!

Here is advice that I would share with other singles and try to remind myself of:

1) It's difficult not to compromise or to settle when you feel alone. Acknowledge that and still stand firm!

2) You are NOT alone! Our Heavenly Father knows you, your heart, and is working in you and your life even when you can't see or feel him.

3) Pray and claim God's promises. I find praying the words of a specific verse really help when I can't find the words to say.



Psalms 34:18: (NASB) "The Lord is near to the broken hearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit." Be near, save me.

Isaiah 30:18: (NIV) "Yet the Lord longs to be gracious to you; therefore, he will rise up to show you compassion. For the Lord is a God of justice. Blessed are all who wait for him!" Help me wait on your timing.

Isaiah 41:10: (NIV) "So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand." Give me strength, hold me up.

Isaiah 43:1-2: (NIV) "But now, this is what the Lord says—he who created you, Jacob, he who formed you, Israel: "Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have summoned you by name; you are mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned; the flames will not set you ablaze." Be with me, help me not to fear.

Lamentations 3:25: (NIV) "The Lord is good to those whose hope is in him, to the one who seeks him." Help me to hope in you and seek you first.

Matthew 6:33: (NIV) "But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well." Help me seek you and your kingdom.

Ephesians 2:10: (NASB) "For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them." I am yours, show me the work I can do.

Colossians 2:10: (NASB) "and in Him you have been made complete, and He is the head over all rule and authority;" Remind me that my completeness comes from you.

Hebrews 13:5: (NIV) "Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have, because God has said, "Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you." Help me find contentment and feel you. Don't leave me.

Sometimes it's as simple as saying, "Lord you know my heart and my thoughts, help me in this struggle," or "Give me your desires."

4) Count your blessings! Reflect on how God is working in your life as a single person in ways that he couldn't if you were married and enjoy these present experiences.

5) Embrace the awkwardness of being single surrounded by couples and find opportunities to spend time in groups with others who are single. Don't lock yourself away from life and its experiences. Give God space to work!

6) God's love IS the greatest you will ever know! It's the only TRUE LOVE we can experience. Don't look to or rely on others for your happiness.



7) *Think about opportunities where you can do more for the Lord and others. And go do it! Spend time working on your relationship with your Heavenly Father and the others he has brought into your life.*

It's not easy advice to follow and definitely still something I struggle with. I'm sure even those who are married and have families can relate to the difficulty of these too.

Advice I'd share when dealing with other single friends:

1) Put yourself in their shoes. Is the question you are going to ask or statement you are going to make about their single status have the potential to cause pain? Is the answer even any of your business?

2) Be someone they can share this struggle with. Listen. Let them vent. Let them cry. Remember, when you're single you don't always have someone to come home to and talk with.

3) Offer to pray with them. Especially if they do share with you. Pray together in THAT moment, with specifics! And then continue to pray for them.

4) Spend time with them. One on one and in larger groups, not always focused on couples or things where you have to pair up or split in half.

5) Remind them they are NOT alone! Remind them again. And again. Have you reminded them lately?

6) Being single means, you sometimes crave small physical interactions, like a pat on the arm, a nudge of the shoulder, kicked feet under the table at a joke, and/or hugs. Especially if one of your love languages is touch. ASK if they need a hug or a high five or a fill in the blank.

*Being a single Christian isn't talked about often. And when it is, it's often in the context of the future and when you *won't be* single anymore. I really, really, REALLY appreciate that you are giving this struggle a voice and different perspective with CQ!*



I woke up this morning thinking of the Biblical women who were given a life of celibacy not of their choosing - Jephthah's daughter (a beautiful illustration of the Church), maybe Dinah (Jacob's daughter) after she was raped, and Tamar who was still young after she had been widowed twice. These women did not have the privilege of a happy married life. Neither did Lot's daughters.

Additionally, we are so accustomed to the American dream of being married and living in our little suburban homes with our 1.87 children (CIA World Factbook), we realize that much of the rest of the world sees marriage in a different light.

Actually, the "joy" of marriage was undoubtedly less about joy in the days when women were considered property. They married not for love, but who their parents decided - for better or for worse. One book which really showed



me what marriages were like was required reading in Wheaton College's anthropology class - "Nectar in a Sieve." It was the fictional story of one woman who lived the life of millions of women in their culture (India). She was married at 13 to a man she'd never seen. Fortunately, he was a kind man and she learned to be content with her life. So many little girls - even in today's society - are married at a young age to a man they don't know. Frequently their lives are filled with pain and hardship, and their lives are filled with duty instead of dreams. They pour their love into their children since being loved is not always a part of their marriage. It's so much better to be single than to be married to someone who does not love you -- or someone that you cannot love (or respect).

I'll start with my story:

I was raised in a home filled with laughter. My Dad was a young father and very enthusiastic about life. My parents worked together toward a common goal of having their home open for people to visit - whether for days or for years. Any disagreements they had were done privately after my sister and I had fallen asleep. I naturally assumed that my role in life was to marry and support a godly man in our mutual vision of God's will for our lives. Whenever anyone asked me what I wanted to be, I would always answer "a mom." After reading the book "Cheaper by the dozen," I thought that 10 kids would be my perfect future.

We make plans, God changes them. As I grew older, I discovered that no men in my Church shared my vision of being happily married to me with 10 children, in a home which was always open to others. As many girls do, I looked for a younger version of my father, but did not find him. Since I did not find him in my Church, I dated outside the church as well. If I could not find this younger version of my dad IN my Church, it is certain that I did not find him out of it. At one point, I found myself engaged to a man from Pakistan. I was in my early 20's and incredibly naïve.

My parents, and another godly woman talked me out of that marriage. At that time, I discovered some hard truths about our relationship. Though he had wished for a more intimate relationship, I had explained that I am a Christian and that there was a limit past which I would not go before marriage. When he did not push me for further intimacy, I had assumed that it was out of respect for me and felt that he honored my Christian values. It was only after we had broken up that I discovered he had found an answer to his "loneliness" with one of my coworkers. Everyone at work except me had known, and they had not wanted to tell me....

That shocked me out of my sorrow at no longer being engaged. It taught me that I am not a good judge of character in regard to the man who would share my life with me. A few other very minor experiences in dating outside the Church were sufficient to convince me that there was no one outside of my Church that I had any interest in marrying.

Since I was still young and convinced that I should marry and have a family, I did not stop looking for a Christian man to take on the headship of my life.



My friends, and even my baby sister began to marry and start their families. I began to realize that none of their husbands measured up to the standard I was looking for in my perfect husband. I began to hear phrases like "marriage is hard work", "choose your battles", and I could no longer make plans with my married friends, as their husbands had made other plans. Some of those marriages ended in divorce and I began to have the strong belief that only a marriage blessed by God is worth having.

My birthdays started having more and more candles on the cake and I began to realize that my child-bearing years were not as many as they had been. I also learned that raising children is not any easier than birthing them. My sister and my niece lived with us. She was an incredibly intelligent and fun child and I love being her auntie. I thoroughly enjoyed having a part in her young life, but as she grew older, into her teen years, I realized how unable I was to help her grow into my vision of who she should be.

My ideal family now had shrunk from 10 children to maybe 1 or 2. More and more I realized my inability to be a good mom, to have the wisdom to know how to deal with a child much more intelligent and self-disciplined than I will ever be. I began to look to the Lord and say, "I am willing to not have children if that is what You think is best."

I still wanted a husband. I realized that my way of finding a husband was not the best. I prayed to God and asked Him for a husband, but He did not answer my prayers in the time frame and with the answer that I was expecting. I kept looking for a godly husband, and along the way made a couple of bad mistakes. One in particular caused me months of prayers of repentance, with tears and weeping. I begged God never to take my guilt away from before my eyes so that I would never repeat this mistake. For I had learned that my own selfish desire to have a husband had hurt innocent people. I had wanted to spend my life serving others, but me trying to do my will in my time and my way had caused people I loved to be hurt.

At that point I told God that I was done with doing His will my way. I wanted Him to do His will His way and I would no longer seek for a husband. If He wanted me to have one, He was going to have to bring that man to me and make it very plain to me that this was His will. I realized so thoroughly that I had been looking at love and marriage as emotions, and not as principles and commitment.

Earlier, I had told God of my ideal of "the perfect man". I was sure that if such a man loved me, that I would never ask for anything else. In God's own miraculous and unexpected way - and in His own time - I received the close bond of friendship with a person who is exactly what I had described to God in my prayer. It is not romantic love. It is a bond on a spiritual level. It will never lead to marriage or anything more than friendship - and I don't want it to. That is what surprises me the most. I am completely content to be single. I feel that this is the way God answered my prayer.

BUT - He did not answer my prayer overnight... or even over the span of 10 years. It is through the mountain tops and the valleys of life's journey, filled



with disappointments and broken hopes and dreams. Finally, in my late 40s or early 50s I began to understand that God's will for my life really was best. I quit looking. I quit being discontent. I started finding reasons to enjoy being single.

1) I was able to be with my father through his end-of-life experiences. My father was my best friend and I had complete trust in him. I am so thankful to the Lord that I could be with him frequently during his 16+ years of paralysis and that I was holding his hand as he died. I was able to tell him and show him my love and appreciation for the amazing father that he was. So many married women move away from their family and cannot be there for their parents except for short visits.

2) I have had wonderful times with my mom as she ages. We travel together, study together, discuss things together and are the closest of friends. I would have missed this privilege if I had to live far from her.

3) I have been able to continue my parents' legacy of serving God by serving His children in the day-to-day aspects of life. I would not have found this avenue of service without their help. It is the rare man who would want his wife to continually bring additional families and students into his home to live!

4) This once rebellious and frequently disobedient child has learned to trust and obey. Maybe I should say "is learning to trust and obey". It is a long process - but I do want to trust and obey God. I want to serve Him in every aspect of my life, including trusting His plan for my life without trying to change it.

5) I am able to live my financial values - to give as I think the Lord would approve, to avoid large debt, to travel and learn languages, and to become close to people - without a husband having the right of headship to go against my understanding of how God wants me to live. One of my fears about marriage was that I would marry someone with expensive taste who would plunge us into eternal debt and no way out.

And the Lord has given me wonderful people who have taught me and helped me to cope with the loss of my childhood dream. One dear friend lost her only child to cancer at 3 years old. Instead of going into a state of depression, and anger at God, she opened her arms to other children in the Church. Every week she came prepared with a bag of goodies for us and we would sit with her and play with those toys quietly by her feet during the sermon and study. When we were older, she and her husband would invite us to their home for a "sewing weekend" or other such fun time in which she taught us the things she had hoped to teach her daughter. We learned sewing and cooking, the 10 commandments and the 12 tribes of Israel.

The Lord has brought children into my life. Not just my niece by blood, but other nieces and nephews who I love and have enjoyed watching them grow up. Even now, I am blessed with a seven-year-old and a four-year-old who share my love of stories, especially those found in the Bible. My life is filled with tickles, hugs and kisses, excited voices and laughter.



My life is filled with friends and activity. They are of all ages, from wise women in their 80s and 90s to young children just learning about life. I have no reason to ever complain. My life is full.

Thoughts which helped me to be content in the state in which I find myself:

If you really love someone, you want what is in their best interest. If you do not really love someone, you don't have the right to marry them anyway. This really became important in my life when I was in my mid-20s. For years I had really liked a young Christian man whom I saw from time to time. We got along very well, and I liked just about everything about him. He was a very gentle person who always made time for the elderly, the sick, and shy people. One day I heard that he would marry one of my friends. I went to a quiet room and really thought about his bride to be. She was my friend and as I considered all her good attributes, I could see that she had many character traits that were better than mine. She would be a good wife to him. In my heart I found the peace that comes with truly loving someone and being content with the thought that their best interest does not include me.

A quote from Christian radio (I think Lois Evans, but I might be mistaken) "it's better to be single wishing you were married than married wishing you were single" has stuck with me for years. I realize that being married is no guarantee of happiness. There are no guarantees that the man I might marry today would not change in the next 20 years. People change - they change their doctrinal views, their attitudes, their expectations and their dreams. Illness, disappointment, or medications can turn a person into a totally different person. Would I be willing to give up my headship to a man who might change and no longer want to serve God in the way I do? Would I be willing to honor, love, and obey someone who might lose faith in God?

Another quote which had a strong effect on me was from a similar source.

Are you single, then thank God and serve Him to the best of your ability as a single woman!

Are you married, then thank God and serve Him to the best of your ability as a married woman!

In whatsoever state I am... therewith to be content - and to serve God to the best of our ability.

Don't experiment. You don't miss what you've never had. Widows who have had happy marriages tell me it's much easier to be single having never been married than to be a young widow and very aware of all they have lost. The more we live our lives in purity, the easier the lack of physical intimacy will be. And this means purity of thought, too. Don't fill your mind with desire that your body cannot enjoy in this season of life. A little curiosity is not always a good thing.

I was often told by kind sisters that it was better not to marry, according to the Apostle Paul. Having read through [1 Corinthians 7](#) (especially verses 29-35), though, I realized that this is only true if we devote our free time to the Lord. To be single and devote all our free time to looking for a husband, feeling



sorry for ourselves, or seeing distractions in our lives is not what the Apostle had in mind.

And that is the key to contentment. It is when we focus our attention on the Lord, on His plan for our lives, on His will being done through us, and on His wisdom and promises, especially Romans 12:2, that we no longer have the time to be focused on what we don't have. Romans 12:2 implies that His will for me - as expressed in my current circumstances - is perfect, good, and acceptable to me.

Apostle Paul reminds us in 1 Corinthians 7:29 that the time is short. I want to be so focused on my heavenly bridegroom that I don't notice the absence of an earthly one.



If you grow up in a Christian family like I did, you're constantly reminded of the admonition that consecrating your life to God is the highest ideal. You're also talked to a lot about how, when you look for your mate, you need to be, as Paul says, evenly yoked. I saw a wonderful marriage between my parents who studied together, talked about the Bible, and tried to live lives harmonious with the scriptures. They also had a lot of fun and laughed a lot. I saw examples of those who didn't marry someone who had the same life of sacrifice. Sometimes it worked out for them. Often, they had problems.

Being single is sometimes considered a shameful thing in our society. It is not easy, especially when you grow up on fairytales and imagine a romantic life with a wonderful husband. It's hard to explain to co-workers why you don't date "in the world." It would be insulting to them to explain that most guys out there aren't "good enough" even though what you mean is that they just don't have the same interests and those interests are your life. It's kind of hard to say, "I am looking for a guy who is willing to go to church for hours every Sunday, puts others first, and will sacrifice his time and talents for others, among other things". So, it's societally awkward. They say, "You've never been married? Never had kids?" (pause) "Sorry." It's only the divorced friends who say, "We should all be like you. You were smart." (I'm always sad that it didn't work out for them).

It's also hard at church sometimes. Well-meaning friends inadvertently make you feel bad when they imply that your life won't start until you get married. I've heard from married couples that those same brethren then imply that their life won't start until they have children. Many have told me that I should pray for a husband. Sometimes I would and then feel guilty because I was not trusting enough and maybe that wasn't really an appropriate thing to pray for.

It helps to realize that some people, while they're trying to help, just want to show you how great their own lives are. They are doing the comparison thing, but the single person is usually found wanting. It would help if others spoke about how great it is to be single!

Here are some of my coping mechanisms:



I look at so many marriages, even those evenly yoked and see a fair share of problems. It helps to know that while there are problems being single, there are also issues for those married "in the Lord." It helps to look back at the guys I could have gotten married to if things had progressed, but they weren't the right fit. I think that it's better to be single than in an unhappy marriage.

I embrace my freedom. If I want to plan a trip, I don't have to consult with anyone except God. If I want to purchase something, the choice is mine. If I want to take up painting, no one minds! I don't have to take kids to soccer practice or sit in a cold hockey rink for hours.

There are also the scriptures that admonish that being single is God's preferred state for us, but of course, marriage is just fine, too. ;-) I think about figuratively being the bride of Christ. Sometimes it is hard to "get there" with this concept. However, it doesn't work to feel sorry for yourself. I used to do that all the time. I think it just makes you less able to cope and less fun to be with. It's better to enjoy the life that God has given us to the fullest.

I am fortunate that the desire to have children wasn't as high as some others. I think that is a gift from God. I really did desire to get married, however. I've learned to accept that maybe it just isn't in God's plan for me. Maybe it will happen, but maybe not.

Comments from Quora and Facebook:

Quora Moses writes: I just focus more time on hearing the word of God through preaching sermons on YouTube and promoting the word of God through the internet. *Here are two Bible verses for anyone suffering from temptation: Isaiah 26:3: Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on Thee: because he trusteth in Thee.*

About the Bible itself: Joshua 1:8: This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success.



There are always positives and negative in whatever situation you're in. We always think someone else has it better or "the grass is greener on the other side". You can either choose to be content or complain whatever state you find yourself in. For those "tired of being singles" out there: The Apostle Paul said, "For I have learned in whatever state I am, therewith to be content." Rejoicing in the Lord always.

Quora Carol from Quora says: I'm a happily single Christian probably because I discovered the high percentage of adulterous, promiscuous, deceptive, selfish, people at church and work. I figured that if God wanted me to have a spouse, HE would have to send me one. I stopped working for one and have been happier ever since.

