

Missionary Singles Issues

Ronald L. Koteskey

Member Care Consultant
GO InterNational

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Ronald L. Koteskey
122 Lowry Lane
Wilmore, KY 40390
USA

ron@missionarycare.com

www.missionarycare.com

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Preface

Modern Western Culture presents serious challenges related to maturity, marriage, and family. Changes in the culture during the last couple of centuries have produced disturbing trends which relate to the singles (unmarried individuals) growing up in it. I am most familiar with the facts in the USA where I live, so I focus here on current results occurring during relatively recent years.

During the last half of the 20th century in the USA and continuing on into the 21st century, the number of divorces equaled about 50% of the number of marriages. This did not mean that half of all those married for the first time divorced that year, but that the total number of divorces was about half the number of marriages. For every 100 single people who decided to marry there were about 50 married people who decided to become single again.

During the last half of the 20th century and continuing on into the 21st century, the percentage of babies born to single women increased. By a decade into the 21st century, more than 40% of babies born in the USA were born to single (unmarried at the time of giving birth) women. That is, out of every 100 babies born, more than 40 were born to single women. This is not to condemn single women more than single men—many of those single men impregnated those women.

These facts are not from surveys in which people can lie, but from counting the actual numbers of marriages and divorces and the actual number of babies born. This many babies were actually born to unmarried women, even when people tried to

avoid pregnancy by using birth control, or avoid pregnancy by using oral sex, or terminated pregnancy through abortion. These disturbing facts are not cited to criticize single people and make them feel depressed or discouraged. Nor do they blame single individuals in Western society, but the culture into which they were born presents challenges to those who are attempting to live holy lives. To understand these developments one has to know what changes took place in the culture.

A brief history of the “invention” of the concept of adolescence and other major changes over the past couple of centuries is in Chapter 1. For those not familiar with these changes, the appendices at the end of the book elaborate on them. This history is given to help singles realize that one major cause of behaviors such as those above is their culture. Of course, this is not to simply blame the culture for everything, but to reassure singles that they are not alone, that their culture has created conditions making some behaviors far more prevalent and more accepted than they were in the past. It pushes them toward failing marriages if and when they marry and for children out of wedlock if they do not. The rest of the book is to help missionary singles understand why particular issues have surfaced, see what the Bible has to say about the issues, and suggest practical ways to face them.

Why write this book? Soon after I wrote a book about issues in missionary marriages I began receiving email asking why I did not have anything available about issues single missionaries faced. I had no answer except that I had not gotten around to it yet. About that time important books about singleness came out each year.

- 2008: Jeannie Lockerbie Stephenson published her excellent book, *By Ones & By Twos: Building Successful Relationships between Marrieds and Singles in Ministry* (ABWE Publishing, Harrisburg, PA). She had written the first edition in 1983 when she was single. More than a decade later she married, and after a decade of marriage

Jeanne and her husband updated the book. It is an excellent resource for missionaries both married and single.

- 2009: Barry Danylak published his great book, *Redeeming Singleness: How the Storyline of Scripture Affirms the Single Life* (Crossway, Wheaton, IL). This work develops a Biblical theology of singleness through both the Old Testament and the New Testament.
- 2010: Christine Colon and Bonnie Field published their thoughtful book, *Singled Out: Why Celibacy Must Be Reinvented in Today's Church* (Brazos Press, division of Baker Publishing, Grand Rapids, MI). Celibacy has taken on negative connotations in both secular and Christian circles. This book promotes a positive concept of celibacy, not as “second best,” but as a way of life in service to God.

However, I kept being asked when I was going to write something for singles, so I have done so. This book neither duplicates what is in the three books mentioned above nor does it cover all the issues singles face. It does cover those issues which are unique to or heightened by those individuals who live in a culture other than their passport culture. I write it, not as one who has lived as a single missionary, but as someone who has talked about singles issues with single missionaries.

This book is written in short, independent chapters, not in any particular order except that Chapter 1, “Introduction: Cultural Changes,” should be read first. After that, just pick chapters in any order that interests you. The appendices primarily elaborate on Chapter 1 for people who are not aware of the changes in Western culture during the past two centuries. They contain much more factual material and much less practical material. As with the other e-books on this website, new chapters will be added to this book in the future as they are written, so check back occasionally.

Finally, I could not have written this book without the help of others. Several singles reviewed a few chapters each and the following people critiqued or edited the entire book: Art Nonneman, Bob Moore, Yvonne Moulton, Nancy Stephens and

CC (who serves in a restricted country). They each made many wonderful suggestions, and I accepted most of them. Of course, any errors in the book are not theirs, but mine.

Chapter 1

Introduction: Cultural Changes

The major reason you are single is because you are living at about the year 2000 AD (or CE). If you had lived 4000 years ago in Old Testament times when Abraham was born, you would probably be married. If you had lived 2000 years ago in New Testament times when Jesus was born, you would probably be married. If you had lived 200 years ago in the USA or Europe, you would probably be married.

Marriages took place at a different time in individuals' lives, and spouses were chosen very differently more than 200 years ago. Trying to translate what happened into contemporary English may lead to confusion, and the meanings of words continue to change. For example, in Matthew 1:18 the King James Version (KJV) says that Mary was "espoused" to Joseph; the New King James Version says that Mary was "betrothed" to Joseph; and the New International Version (NIV) says that Mary was "pledged to be married" to Joseph. Looking up these words in the 1975 *Webster's New 20th Century Dictionary Unabridged* resulted in these definitions.

- Espouse: to betroth; as, the king *espoused* his daughter to a foreign prince.
- Betroth: to pledge in marriage; as, the father *betroths* his daughter.

- Pledge: to promise. The NIV does not tell who made the agreement, but it probably was between Joseph's and Mary's parents.

On-line definitions of espouse and betroth today do not give examples of parents being involved. This aspect, so common previously, is ignored today.

Today's readers are often further confused when in the next verse (Matthew 1:19) Joseph is called "her husband" in all three translations. The Greek word "aner" is the word translated "husband" as it is in 49 other places in the New Testament, but "aner" is also translated "man" in another 156 places in the New Testament! Joseph was "her man." *The Message* says that Mary was "engaged to be married" and does not give any label (husband or man) to Joseph. To understand better, we need to consider changes in our own culture.

Cross-cultural workers are keenly aware of how one culture varies from another because they have to learn the differences between their passport cultures and their host cultures to serve effectively. Those same workers may not be aware of how their own cultures have changed over the years so that concepts, such as "singleness," may mean something quite different today from what they meant many years ago.

Most Cultures until the 19th Century

In Bible times, like today, singleness meant that the person was unmarried; however, who was single and why they were single were quite different from today. To understand who was single and why they were single, we must look at marriage customs and laws of the day.

Marriage at Puberty

In most cultures, including that of the Hebrews in the Old Testament, people expected to marry at about the age of sexual maturity, the age of puberty. Many passages in the

Talmud contain comments about the expected age of marriage, and those comments indicate that the ideal age of marriage was the age of puberty. In fact, not marrying daughters at puberty was viewed by some rabbis in the Talmud as making her a prostitute (Leviticus 19:29). The minimum legal age of marriage was 12 for women and 13 for men. This became more formalized with the advent of the Bat Mitzvah for women and the Bar Mitzvah for men.

In New Testament times the Roman law allowed women to marry at 12 and men at 14. English law from a thousand years ago also allowed women to marry at 12 and men at 14. USA laws 200 years ago allowed women to marry at 12 and men at 14. Of course, most people did not marry at those ages because they did not go through puberty until later. However, most of them apparently married at about the age of puberty. Therefore, at that time most singles were children because many people married as soon as they became adults (i.e. sexually mature).

Marriage Arranged by the Parents

In most cultures, including the Hebrews of the Old Testament, marriages were arranged by the parents. Abraham asked a trusted servant to go find a wife for Isaac, giving explicit instructions for what she was to be like and how to go about doing it (Genesis 24). Isaac gave Jacob explicit instructions about whose daughter to marry (Laban's), and Jacob obeyed (Genesis 28). After Jacob picked out Rachel and agreed with Laban, he found that Laban had tricked him into marrying Leah, Rachel's older sister (Genesis 29). When Jacob confronted him about switching daughters, Laban explained that it "is not our custom here" to give a younger daughter in marriage before the older one was married.

As with marriage at puberty, the Roman, English, and colonial American cultures followed the same pattern of arranged marriages. Early Puritans in the USA did not

“ensnare” their children in vows of virginity but married them as soon as possible. In these cultures, if a person was single beyond puberty, it was because of the parents. Isaac was 40 before he married, but that was because Abraham had not found him a wife. Apparently Leah had some problem with her eyes that made finding a husband more difficult, so she had not yet married, but Laban insisted on carrying out his duty to find her a husband, even if he had to be deceitful (Genesis 29:25-26).

For thousands of years single people were those younger than puberty and those whose parents had not found them a mate. Note that these are arranged marriages, not forced marriages. If either the prospective bride or the prospective groom did not want that marriage, it did not occur. The prospective bride or groom (or the parents) could choose not to go through with the marriage. Then the “search” began again.

(For more information see Appendix D)

Mostly Single Missionaries

From the time of Christ until the 19th century the Good News was spread to different cultures primarily by singles, and most of those were men. The apostle Paul was not married, and he advised against it in 1 Corinthians 7. He said that it was not wrong to marry if people needed to, but people could be more effective in serving God if they were not concerned with pleasing their spouses.

After New Testament times unmarried Roman Catholic priests and nuns spread Christianity around the world. They literally “renounced marriage for the Kingdom of God” (Matthew 19:12). The majority of these Catholic missionaries traveling all over the world were men, and they had chosen to remain single so that they could better please God.

Nuns may be considered “brides of Christ” because of this ceremony referred to in the Catholic Catechism: “923. Virgins who, committed to the holy plan of following Christ more closely, are consecrated to God by the diocesan bishop

according to the approved liturgical rite, are betrothed mystically to Christ, the Son of God, and are dedicated to the service of the Church.” Some nuns consider this a marriage ceremony and wear wedding rings.

Western Culture since the 19th Century

During the 19th century changes in the minimum legal age of marriage and the age of puberty began to take place in Europe and North America. At the same time the prevalence of arranged marriages declined.

Marriage Illegal at Puberty

Between the middle of the 19th century and the middle of the 20th century the age of puberty in both men and women decreased by three or four years in Western countries. The ages of puberty in women dropped from about 16 to about 12, and in men dropped from about 17 to about 14. Although no one is sure why it happened, the decrease is well documented by hundreds of studies over a couple centuries.

During the same time period countries increased the minimum legal ages of marriages by about six years. By the middle of the twentieth century the most common minimum legal ages for marriage were 18 for women and 21 for men. This difference in age for women and men, like that of earlier laws, showed an awareness that women matured earlier than men. However, in the 1960s in nearly every state the ages were changed to eighteen for both men and women.

Figure 1 shows visually how these factors changed singleness. For thousands of years people were able to marry when they reached puberty. Now it is illegal for them to marry until several years later. This is forced singleness, a new kind of singleness. By law everyone is required to live at least five or six years as a single. This “forced” singleness is difficult for individuals who would like to marry.

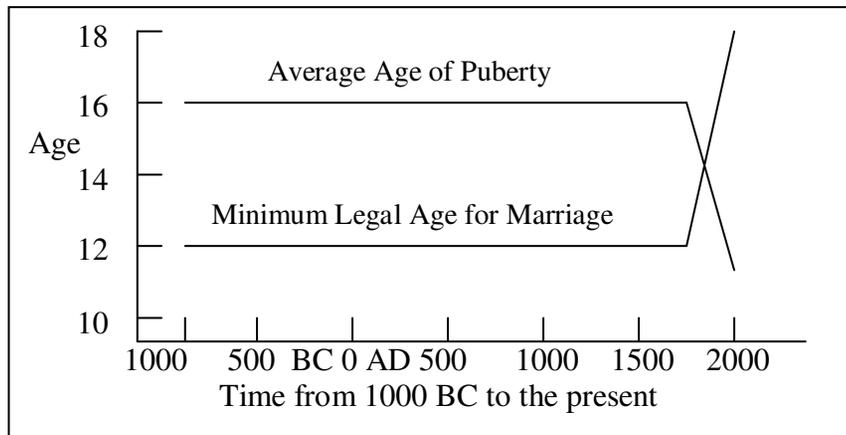


Figure 1. Major changes in average age of puberty and minimum legal age for marriage for women during the last 3000 years. The ages for men would be about two years later (except in the case of marriage since the 1960s).

Marriage Arranged by the Couple

During the same time period, the last couple of centuries, parental arranged marriages also declined. At first the young couples began making their own arrangements and then getting the blessing of their parents. However, today many couples do not even consult their parents and marry even if their parents disapprove.

Before the 19th century people could “blame” their parents if their spouses were not to their liking (if married) or if they were still single (if unmarried) because their parents had not found them a spouse. Of course, as God did for thousands of years, he still calls some individuals to lives of singleness, and others make that choice on their own. However, if other people today are single beyond the minimum legal age of marriage, they do not have their parents to hold responsible for

their spouse or for their singleness.

Most individuals in the 21st century still find a spouse among people they know well or at least have met personally at some time. However, an increasing number are using the help of matchmakers online to recommend possible spouses. Just as Abraham asked his trusted servant to recommend a spouse for Isaac, today more and more people who have not found a suitable spouse among their acquaintances ask on-line dating services to recommend possible spouses. If one recommendation is not satisfactory, the person asks the service for another.

Single Again

In the 19th and much of the 20th centuries once people married they could never become single again. Although they had no spouse, they were classified as divorced or widowed. However as divorcees rapidly increased and widows or widowers were looking for spouses, such people began to be classified as singles. With this change in terminology, “singles” (any currently unmarried person) are a rapidly increasing segment of Western society. In fact, in 2007 in England and Wales for the first time there were more single adults than there were married adults. Although this is not yet the case in the USA, the trends show that it will soon be. An interesting note is that the US Census Bureau now seldom uses the term “single.” It classifies people as married and unmarried. Then it divides the unmarried ones into three categories: never married, divorced, and widowed.

Mostly Married Missionaries

Since the beginning of the 19th century, when Protestant William Carey became the “father of modern missions,” the majority of long-term missionaries have been married. Leadership among these Protestant missionaries was primarily

married men, most of whom took their wives and children with them as they took the Good News about Jesus Christ first along the coasts of the continents and then inland to places that had little access to the outside world.

Today only about a quarter of these Protestant evangelical missionaries are single, and the majority of these single missionaries are women. Some of these single women have been passed over for positions of leadership because agencies did not approve of women in leadership over men. However, some of them still have emerged as leaders in service and have been so outstanding that books and movies have featured their lives.

Conclusion

During the last two centuries singleness has changed as Western culture forced everyone to go through several years of singleness after puberty. In addition, the choice of marriage partner is no longer the responsibility of parents but of the young adults themselves, so they remain unmarried until they find a spouse. This is not a call to return to arranged marriages of teenagers as was common until two centuries ago. It would be nice if that were possible, but few children reared in Western culture today are ready to play adult roles at the age of puberty. They have not been prepared for adult roles in life, are required to attend school, and are forbidden to work. They are often not responsible, and virtually no one expects them to act responsibly.

Single people have always been vital to the missionary enterprise. If there had been no single missionaries, Christianity would be much less a world-wide religion than it is today. Imagine the world without the apostle Paul, without any Roman Catholic priests or nuns in other cultures, and without a quarter of the missionary force today.

If you would like to know more about the changes in Western culture during the last couple of centuries please read

Appendix A: “The New Singleness,” Appendix B: “Is Singleness OK?” Appendix C: Single Again, and Appendix D: “Arranged Marriage” at the end of this book. For further information about the forced singleness of adolescence, please see *Understanding Adolescence* at <http://www.missionarycare.com/ebook.htm#adolescence>.

Chapter 2

Love

The conversation between Jesus and Peter in John 21:15-17 goes something like this:

Jesus: “Peter, do you love me?”

Peter: “Yes, Lord, you know that I love you.”

Jesus: “Peter, do you love me?”

Peter: “Yes, Lord, you know that I love you.”

Jesus: “Peter, do you love me?”

Peter: “Yes, Lord, you know that I love you.”

What is going on in this conversation? It seems like Jesus and Peter are repeating the same thing over and over without really communicating. This is not the case.

Lost in Translation

Who would know more about things getting lost in translation than missionaries serving in places other than their passport culture? Such missionaries are keenly aware of trying to explain the concepts of Christianity in cultures which may not even have the concept, much less have words for the concept.

The problem in understanding what is taking place between Jesus and Peter is that English has only one word for love. Jesus and Peter in this case begin the conversation using

different words for love, and only on the third time do they use the same word.

In English we may say “I love hamburgers,” “I love you,” and “I love God.” We use the same word for quite different kinds of love. Other cultures often have a richer vocabulary when it comes to love. To understand the different aspects of love for single and married people we need to at least realize that there are different kinds of love.

Three Dimensions of Love

In the 1980s Psychologist Robert Sternberg used factor analysis, a complicated statistical procedure, to study different kinds of love. After analyzing many different ways that love was used in sentences, he concluded that there were primarily three different dimensions of love. He called them decision/commitment, intimacy, and passion.

The Greek language in which John records the conversation between Peter has a variety of words for different kinds of love. That is what Peter and Jesus were disagreeing over. The three Greek words describing what Sternberg “discovered” a few years ago are agape, phileo, and eros. Peter and John were using agape and phileo 2000 years ago talking about different dimensions of love.

Agape (Decision/Commitment)

In John 21:15 the first time Jesus asked, “Peter, do you love me?” Jesus used the Greek word “agape.” Considering scripture passages that use agape is the best way to learn what agape love is.

- God loves (agape). John 3:16, “God so loved the world...”
- Jesus loves (agape). John 15:9, “As the father has loved (agape) me, so have I loved (agape) you.”
- God commands us to love (agape). John 13:34, “As I have loved (agape) you, so you must love (agape) one another.”

- Sinners can love (agape). Luke 6:32, “Even sinners love (agape) those who love (agape) them.”
- Evil people love (agape). John 3:9, “Men loved (agape) darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil.”
- Demas loved (agape). 2 Timothy 4:10, “Demas, because he loved (agape) this world has deserted me.”
- Agape love is best defined in the “love” chapter, 1 Corinthians 13. “Love (agape) is patient, love (agape) is kind...”

Of course, agape occurs many more times in the New Testament, but these passages illustrate its meaning. Agape love involves making a choice and a making a commitment to that choice. The traditional marriage vows were all about agape love. They include commitment to the other person “for better or for worse, for richer or for poorer, in sickness or in health, until death do us part.” There is no mention of only as long as you arouse me sexually or as long as I like you.

Descriptions of agape love include such words as unconditional, thinking, fidelity, caring, decision, faithful, cognitive, and mental. This is the cognitive part of love in which individuals make decisions to commit themselves to another person for life. Single missionaries are encouraged to love people with agape love.

Phileo (Intimacy)

In John 21:15 when Peter replied to Jesus, “You know that I love you. Peter used the Greek word “phileo” rather than agape (which Jesus had used). Again considering scripture passages that use phileo is the best way to learn what phileo love is.

- God loves (phileo). John 5:20, “The Father loves (phileo) the Son.”
- Jesus loves (phileo). John 11:3, “The sisters sent word to Jesus, ‘Lord, the one you love (phileo) is sick.’”

- People love (Phileo). John 16:27, “The father himself loves (phileo) you because you have loved (phileo) me.”
- People love (phileo). Romans 12:10, “be devoted to one another in brotherly love.”
- People may love (phileo) too much. Matthew 10:37, “Anyone who loves (phileo) father, mother, son, or daughter more than me is not worthy of me.”
- People may love (phileo) wrong things. 1 Timothy 6:10, “The love (phileo) of money is a root of all kinds of evil.”

Of course, phileo occurs more times in the New Testament, but these passages illustrate its meaning. Phileo love is what we would call close friendship. Philadelphia is a city in Pennsylvania today, a city in Asia Minor in New Testament times, and a Greek word usually translated “brotherly love.”

Descriptions of phileo love include words such as closeness, bonded, connected, communication, support, sharing, feelings, and warmth. This is the emotional part of love in which individuals share intimately (not sexually). Single missionaries are encouraged to love people with phileo love.

Eros (Passion)

In Greek mythology Eros was the god of sexual love worshiped as a fertility deity. It is not surprising that the Greek word “eros” does not appear in the Bible. However, the Old Testament has several erotic passages that describe such sensuality.

- Proverbs 5:18-19, “Rejoice with the wife of your youth. Let her breasts satisfy you at all times and be ravished always with her love.”
- Song of Songs 5:4, “My lover put his hand through the latch opening and my heart began to pound for him.”
- Song of Songs 7:7-8, “Your body is like a palm tree and your breasts like clusters of the fruit. I said, “I will climb the palm tree and take hold of its fruit.”

- Genesis 29:17-21, “Rachel was lovely in form and beautiful...Jacob served seven years to get her, but it seemed like only a few days. He said to Laban, ‘Give me my wife. My time is completed and I want to lie with her.’”

Descriptions of erotic (eros) love include such words as sexual arousal, touching, hot, physical, petting, oral sex, and sexual intercourse. This is the motivational part of sex which leads to sexual relations. Currently such relationships are often called “friends with benefits.” The couple again intends it to be just physical intercourse one time with no emotional involvement. Of course, single missionaries are discouraged from such love.

Contemporary English uses “passion” as referring to any powerful, compelling emotion driving a person, such as a “passion for souls.” Missionaries are urged to express this.

Agape & Phileo (Commitment & Intimacy)

Single missionaries are encouraged to love individuals with both agape love and phileo love. Although it is in the Old Testament so it is not written in Greek, the relationship between David and Jonathan is one including both kinds of love. Notice the underlined words in the following verses.

- Agape: 1 Samuel 18:3, “Jonathan made a covenant with David.”
- Agape: 1 Samuel 20:17, “Jonathan had David reaffirm his oath out of love...”
- Phileo: 1 Samuel 18:1, “Jonathan became one in spirit with David.”
- Phileo: 1 Samuel 20:42, “We have sworn friendship with each other.”

Sometimes in scripture agape and phileo appear to be virtually interchangeable, such as when Jesus talks about the Pharisees loving the important places in the synagogues and marketplace (Matthew 23:6; Luke 11:43).

Eros & Phileo (Passion & Intimacy)

Many in today’s world say that eros love is acceptable if the couple also have phileo love, they like each other and are friends. That is, it is acceptable to have sexual intercourse if they love (phileo) each other and neither is married. American culture calls this premarital sex to take away the stigma that comes from calling it fornication or sexual immorality as the Bible does. Single missionaries are discouraged from this kind of sexual activity.

Eros & Agape (Passion & Commitment)

Of course, eros love is acceptable if a man and woman have made an agape commitment (marriage), but then they are no longer single missionaries! Although this is not sinful, it makes little sense. Sternberg calls this fatuous love, silly or foolish. A marriage in which spouses have no phileo love would be quite empty with a lack of companionship and intimacy.

Agape, Eros, & Phileo (Commitment, Passion, & Intimacy)

Again, this is acceptable, even great—but such people are no longer single missionaries. This combination of all three kinds of love is a great goal for all married couples. The challenge for such couples is to keep all three kinds of love at a high level throughout their marriage.

Chapter 3

Celibacy and Chastity

Celibacy and chastity are synonyms, aren't they? The dictionary seems to have the same definitions for both. If you look one up in a thesaurus, the other one comes up as a synonym. That is like stating that something is redundant, and it says the same thing!

Lost in Translation

Who would know more about things getting lost in translation than missionaries serving in places other than their passport culture? Such missionaries are keenly aware of trying to explain the concepts of Christianity in cultures which may not even have such a concept, much less have a word for the concept.

Contemporary English has appropriated two different Latin words with different meanings and now uses those two words as synonyms. This results in confusion between the two related concepts. In requiring vows of celibacy for priests and nuns, the Roman Catholic Church also often got chastity as well. However, when Western culture required celibacy of all adolescents, it did not get chastity nearly as often.

Celibacy

The word “celibate” is from the Latin *celibatus*, which literally means “a single life.” By definition unmarried persons are celibate. Dictionaries up to the middle of the 20th century typically defined “celibacy” as “an unmarried state; single life.”

Today's dictionaries often still have that definition but usually add another definition which includes abstaining from sexual intercourse, and they give chastity as a synonym. *Encyclopedia Britannica* online reads: “**celibacy**, the state of being unmarried and, therefore, sexually abstinent.” Rather than propose a new word meaning “unmarried” I am using celibacy in its original meaning. As you read please remember that celibacy means unmarried, nothing more. I am married, so I am not celibate. If you are unmarried you are celibate.

Chastity

The word “chaste” is from the Latin *castus* which literally means “pure.” Dictionaries up to the middle of the 20th century typically defined “chastity” as “not indulging in illicit sexual intercourse; virtuous.”

Today's dictionaries often define it as purity, but add something about not being married. Again, rather than propose a new word meaning “sexual purity,” I am using chastity in its original meaning. While reading this, please remember that is the only meaning of the word. Individuals may live in any of the following four states.

- Neither celibate nor chaste: Married and engaging in illicit sexual intercourse.
- Both celibate and chaste: Single and not engaging in sexual intercourse.
- Celibate but not chaste: Single and engaging in sexual intercourse.
- Chaste but not celibate: Married and engaging in sexual intercourse only with spouse.

Required Celibacy; not Chastity

The “therefore” in the quote from *Encyclopedia Britannica* above is what people in Western cultures used to believe. That is, if individuals were unmarried, they would be sexually abstinent. Making this assumption, Legislators in many Western cultures raised the legal age at which people could marry, assuming that these young unmarried people would abstain from sexual intercourse.

As we well know now, that often is not the case. As reported in *Public Health Reports* the National Survey of Family Growth found in 2002 that by age 18 60% of the men and 54% of the women reported that they had experienced premarital sex. These adolescents were nearly all unmarried (not old enough to legally marry), so they were living in celibacy but not chastity.

People may not tell the full truth on surveys, but other data confirms that many unmarried people have sex. The USA Centers for Disease Control (CDC) reported that in 41% of all births in 2008 were to unmarried women 15-44 years of age. Those 1,700,000 women were living in celibacy, but they were not chaste. They were unmarried, but they had illicit sexual intercourse.

Sexually transmitted disease rates in the USA are at historic highs. The CDC reported the rates of gonorrhea by age and sex and the highest rates of any group are women 15-19 years of age. Many of those cases are gonorrhea of the pharynx contracted by these young women giving oral sex to their male friends. These thousands of people are living in celibacy (illegal for them to marry until at least age 18) but not in chastity.

When General Booth and other well-meaning people campaigned to have the minimum legal age of marriages raised to 16, it is unlikely that any of them anticipated that two of

every five babies born in the USA would be to unmarried mothers.

Celibacy's threats to Chastity

Three times in 1 Corinthians 7 Paul mentioned that remaining unmarried could threaten one's purity.

- Since there is so much immorality both men and women should marry to have their own spouses (v. 2).
- If people can't control themselves, it is better to marry than to burn with passion (v. 9).
- If a man believes he is acting improperly toward his fiancé who is getting older, it is good for him to marry her (v. 36).

What can we do?

The most important thing single missionaries can do to maintain sexual purity is to love God with their whole beings, their heart, soul, strength, and mind (Luke 10, Deuteronomy 6). Your relationship to God must take top priority

- Have a daily, consistent devotional time to maintain your relationship with God. Include at least reading Scripture, meditating, and praying. (Bible study for sermon preparation, writing, teaching preparation, and so forth is not enough!)
- Receive God's love, experience God's love, surrender to his love and let him love you (as a Single).
- Make a specific commitment to God to live a holy life free of sexual sin. Write this commitment down and place it where you will see it daily (desk, mirror, etc.).
- Study, meditate on, memorize, and apply scripture on this topic. Note that in the major passages where the Bible talks about being holy it is in the context of sexual sin (Leviticus 18-20, I Corinthians 5-7). Review these on a regular basis.

The second most important thing single missionaries can do to maintain sexual purity is to love others (Luke 10, Leviticus 19). Your love relationships with others must have a high priority as well. Relative to sexual purity this would include the following.

- Learn the cues in your host country that signal sexual purity and sexual availability. These include such things as dress, eye contact, posture, gestures, and so forth.
- Be aware that even within cultures people vary widely on the meaning of touch. Something you consider indicating only friendship may be interpreted as sexual by another person. Touch is not improper, but be aware that what you mean as “good touch” may be interpreted by another as “bad touch” or erotic touch.
- Be especially alert when in “high risk” situations, such as being alone with another person, spending prolonged time working with another person, and so forth.
- Meet weekly an accountability partner (or group) to answer specific questions about your sexual purity.

The third most important thing that single missionaries can do to maintain sexual purity is to love themselves, to care for themselves as they care for others.

- Accept your own vulnerability.
1 Corinthians 10:12 reminds us that if we think we are standing firm, we must be careful or we will fall.
- List (actually write them down) sexual things you will not do, such as those found in Leviticus 18-20.
- List sexual things that may be permissible but not beneficial, things that may master you as in 1 Corinthians 6. These are things not specifically mentioned in Scripture, such as certain movies, music, TV shows, books, Internet sites, and so forth. These are not necessarily sinful, but they may lead to sinful behavior.
- Concentrate on “renewing your mind” as described in Colossians 3 and in Ephesians 4. Take every thought captive to make it obedient to God as described in

2 Corinthians 10. Think on the kinds of things mentioned in Philippians 4.

- Avoid danger zones for you. If you know that you are tempted visually, do not watch videos or TV shows that you know will contain graphic sexual images. If you know that you are tempted verbally, do not visit Internet chat rooms or read explicit romance novels.
- Develop an early warning system to increase your awareness of problems coming. Knowing that you will be talking with an accountability partner is likely to make you more aware of danger zones.
- Develop a plan for combating temptations which will occur in spite of your attempts to avoid them. If your greatest temptation is visual images, train your eyes to “bounce” away from such images as soon as they appear. If your temptation is through touch, train yourself to withdraw as soon as any touch becomes erotic.

Joseph was a handsome, single, young man with hormones raging (just past puberty) when he was taken to a different culture. When his boss’ wife asked him to have sex with her, he politely refused and gave her good reasons for his refusal. He refused her repeated requests. One time when he went to work and they were alone in the house, she grabbed his coat and asked for sex, but he left his coat and ran out of the house. You can maintain your sexual purity too, but you may have to run from a person, or your computer!

Chapter 4

Loneliness

Lately you have been feeling “invisible.” It seems like everyone else has friends, but you are just “in” the crowd—not “of” the crowd. You feel empty, disconnected, and alienated from those around you—socially inadequate, socially unskilled. You are anxious and sad but feel like no one else knows how miserable and isolated you are. Thanksgiving has been the worst; it was always a day of family and friends, but none are around. Now you are dreading Christmas coming.

People around you are friendly and greet you with a smile. However, you find it difficult, seemingly impossible, to have any really meaningful interaction with others. You would like to meet new people and make deep friendships, but you just can’t bring yourself to take part in social activities to make friends.

Feeling unloved and unwanted, you are lonely. But how could you be lonely when there are people all around you? Isn’t God always with you so that you will not be lonely? Can missionaries be lonely? What can you do?

How can I be lonely?

You are certainly not alone if you live in a city of millions of people. However, loneliness has nothing to do with

being alone; it has to do with relationships. If you live in a village of a hundred people, you are much less likely to be lonely than if you live in a city of a million people. You are likely to know the names of everyone you meet in that village, but you may never meet anyone you know in that city.

Some singles choose to be alone, to experience solitude, and they find it a positive, pleasurable, enriching time. Loneliness is essentially unwilling solitude, wanting to be in relationship with others but not experiencing it. “Forced solitude,” solitary confinement, is one of the most terrible punishments used on people in prison.

You may be relatively new to the culture in which you live so that you find it difficult to have meaningful relationships with the nationals. You have not yet internalized enough of the culture to feel at ease with close relationships in it. Or you may have been in that culture for many years, even the leader of your group, and still be lonely. Being the leader changes your relationships with everyone in the group and it is “lonely at the top.”

Can God’s people be lonely?

You may think, “Isn’t God with me everywhere? I’m part of the family of God so how can I be lonely?” God is with you everywhere, but you need human relationships as well. You are part God’s family, but you may still not have the deep friendships you desire with other members of his family. You can still be lonely. Here are some examples.

- Adam. Even before sin entered humanity, God noted that it was not good for Adam (a single) to be alone, so God created Eve as a companion with whom Adam could be in relationship (Genesis 2).
- David. In the Psalms David said, “My friends and companions avoid me...my neighbors stay far away” (31:11), and “look to my right and see; no one is concerned for me” (142:4).

- Jesus said, “You will leave me all alone. Yet I am not alone, for my Father is with me (John 16:32). Only hours later even the Father was gone, and Jesus said, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” (Matthew 27:46).

Do other missionaries feel this way?

Everyone feels lonely at times, and missionaries are no exception. Living in a strange culture away from family and friends, most people feel lonely.

Near the end of his second letter to Timothy, Paul (a single missionary) wrote about several things that made him feel lonely.

- Demas, because he loved this world, has deserted me (2 Timothy 4:10).
- Crescens has gone to Galatia (2 Timothy 4:10).
- Titus (has gone) to Dalmatia (2 Timothy 4:10).
- At my first defense, no one came to my support, but everyone deserted me (2 Timothy 4:16).
- Do your best to get here before winter (2 Timothy 4:20).

Paul even asked Timothy to bring Mark, a man who had deserted Paul and Barnabas years before. Paul had held this desertion against Mark many years and would not even let Mark go with him on his second term of missionary service. Lonely now, Paul said:

- Get Mark and bring him with you, because he is helpful to me in my ministry (2 Timothy 4:11).

What causes loneliness?

Loneliness is common because it has so many causes. These causes may be found in your situation or within you. Here are some possible causes.

- Your moving. Part of being a missionary is moving from one place to another, either reentering your passport culture

- repeatedly or moving from one culture to another. Singles do not even have a spouse to talk with when they first move.
- Friends moving. If you do not move, other people from your agency are likely to. Expatriates are constantly on the move.
- Away from family and friends. Part of working cross-culturally is living in a place far from acquaintances in your past.
- Expectations not met. Perhaps you had heard how friendly people were in your host culture, but you find them quite distant.
- Rejected. You may not be accepted by the people you came to serve and feel rejected even by people serving in your agency.
- Discriminated against. You came to serve, but you find that political or social forces in your host country discriminate against you because of your passport country, your race, your religion, your gender, or even your singleness.
- Surface relationships. 1. You long to share deeply with others, but you are not able to find anyone in your agency or in your host culture who wants to do so.
- Surface relationships. 2. You do not want to become too close to anyone because you know that either they or you will be moving soon.
- Lack of social skills. You do not understand how to interact well in your host culture—or maybe your passport one.
- Self-conscious or shy. Having low self-esteem or lack of self-confidence. You find it difficult to get close to anyone, single or married, in any culture.
- Anxiety, depression, feelings of worthlessness or social phobias. Personal problems in adjustment prevent you from interacting adequately with other expats or nationals.
- The city feels so unfriendly. You grew up in a farming community or small town, and the large city in which you serve has no similar sense of community.

What can I do to get over loneliness?

The good news about loneliness is that you CAN take steps yourself to get over it. It is the only “disorder” that can be cured by adding two or more cases together! However, the more lonely you feel, the harder it is to take the steps needed, so remember that it takes time, effort, and commitment. You may need the help of a counselor to begin to take those steps.

Basically what you want to do is to find the cause (perhaps from the ones listed above) and then do things to counteract that cause. You may have to make changes in your situation or changes in yourself. Do not wait for your feelings of loneliness to go away—act first, and the change in feelings will come later. Here are some suggestions.

- Look for ways to get involved with people around you, such as eating with them, sitting near them, exercising with them.
- Transitions, vacations, and holidays can be very lonely for singles, so plan in advance what you will do and with whom.
- Find an older single missionary who will coach or mentor you.
- Put yourself in situations where you will meet new people, such as joining a club, attending a new church, and doing volunteer work with others single or married.
- Develop your social skills, practice getting to know others, and become vulnerable enough to let people know you.
- Do not assume new relationships will be the same as old ones. Look at each new person from a new perspective.
- Respond to other singles and their interests, but do not pretend to be interested in something you are not. People will sense your insincerity.
- Go do things you like to do even if you have to go alone if it is safe to do so. Attending a concert or film, even taking a walk you may meet someone with similar interests.

- Beware of burying yourself in ministry to escape loneliness because it may make you even more inaccessible to others.
- Take a class in an area of interest. You may meet singles with similar interests.
- Ask people about themselves because people usually want to share with someone who is interested in them.

A word of caution!

Modern communication technology, such as e-mail, instant messaging, webcams, VoIP, and low international phone rates has resulted in some people becoming so interested in maintaining old relationships that they fail to build new ones.

These distant relationships may make us think that we do not need intimate face-to-face relationships. This is not the case. Even though you may be able to hear and even see the person, it is not the same as interacting with a real person.

Trying to maintain such a relationship is often not satisfying and may result in not developing adequate relationships with others.

Chapter 5

Identity

A conversation between two single teachers in an international school could go something like this.

Mary: “John, when I’m here at school, I know who I am and where I fit. I am on the faculty with people like you and I am a teacher to the children in my classroom. However, the only other missionaries here with our agency are a married couple. When I am with them, I feel like a third wheel. I’ve been very careful not to do anything flirtatious, but I am sure Jan sees me as doing so.”

John: “I know exactly what you mean, Mary. I’m fine here at school, but I feel different in my agency. Three other families are here with my agency, but the norm is ‘married with children.’ Whenever we get together, I feel like the odd man out because I don’t have much interest in discussing what to do with the kids or how to make time for my spouse.”

These single missionaries are talking about issues related to their roles and their identities.

Identity

Although there are a few hermits who withdraw from other people and live alone, most of us get much of our identity from our relationships with other people. Of course, we have

our identity in our relationship with God as being his children, but we still need other people made in his image. We learn what our roles are as we interact with these other people, and much of who we are comes from living those roles.

Paul was a single missionary who knew his identity well. When in Jerusalem Paul was arrested as a mob became violent. Here is the way Paul gave his identity as he introduced himself to the crowd (Acts 22:3).

- I am a Jew (his cultural identity),
- Born in Tarsus of Cilicia (city of his birth where he learned Greek language and culture),
- But brought up in this city (Jerusalem as a Third Culture Kid where he learned to speak Aramic and to live in the Jewish culture),
- Studied the Jewish faith under Gamaliel (his religious identity through a famous teacher).
- He became a follower of Christ and Anannias who sent him to witness to everyone everywhere (verse 15).
- Finally, he revealed that he was a Roman citizen (verse 27).

Paul told about all of the cultures and people who had given him an identity. He knew who he was.

Likewise, Jesus knew who he was even at twelve years of age when he stayed behind in Jerusalem as his family left to return to Nazareth. When his parents found him with the teachers of the law and said they could not find him, he said, “Didn’t you know I would be in my Father’s house?” Then he went to Nazareth with them and was obedient to them. He was clear about his identity as related to God in heaven and as related to his parents on earth.

Of course, we must remember that in Jesus’ culture he would become a man within a year, when he became 13. He was not six years from adulthood as he would be in Western culture today; he was a matter of months from becoming an adult at that time.

Identity vs Role Confusion

Unlike in the time of Paul and Jesus when teenagers knew their identity, teenagers today go through a period of time when they do not know who they are and where they fit. During this time of forced singleness these teenagers go through what Erik Erikson called an identity crisis and are confused about the roles they are to play.

During this identity crisis, teens are no longer children but the culture still does not consider them to be adults. So they have no specific roles to play and are confused about who they are and where they fit. The usual path to identity is to find work, settle into a community, become involved in a church, marry, and have children. As they take on more and more of these roles, they become more and more sure of their identity.

Unavailable Roles

Individuals who remain single past the age of adolescence find the roles of being a spouse or a parent generally unavailable to them.

- Husband. By definition an unmarried man is not a husband.
- Wife. Likewise, by definition an unmarried woman is not a wife.
- Father. In some places and some occupations a man is able to adopt a child and be a father, but it is often complicated in a host culture, and the child grows up with no mother in the home.
- Mother. Likewise, it is often complicated for a woman, and the child grows up with no father in the home.

People who are not committed Christians often want these roles, so they simply try living together without the commitment of marriage and have children without being married. This disregard of God's word usually does not lead to the satisfaction they are seeking. However, it does disqualify them from being Christian missionaries.

Single individuals who become missionaries find other common roles which are available but are also less likely to contribute to their identity.

- Work. Single missionaries usually join an agency in which the other workers are spread around the world so the single missionaries may never meet most of their colleagues in their agencies.
- Community. Although most single missionaries have a place they call "home," they are seldom there. When in their passport countries they are often traveling to raise support. When serving in their host country, they do not see neighbors at "home."
- Church. Although single missionaries have a home (sending) church, they seldom attend it because they are either raising support in their passport countries or serving far away in their host cultures.

Available Roles in Passport Country

Singles in their passport countries usually have the same spouse and parent roles unavailable. They often have more choices of other roles available to them, and they can join these roles as well. With more Christians around, they tend to form interest groups in which fellowship is around these other interests so that it makes little difference whether individuals are married or single. Here are some examples.

- One church has a NASCAR Sunday school class of about 50 people, both male and female. Conversation before and after Bible study revolves about cars and races.
- Another pastor and youth worker have become storm chasers. It makes no difference whether one is single or married when chasing a tornado.
- Another church has a knitting/crocheting group. Marital status makes no difference when putting yarn on a needle.
- One community has a book club and a garden club in which singleness makes no difference.

- When spending the weekend hunting or fishing with the guys, marital status makes no difference.
- When attending a ladies night out to shop and watch a chick flick, marital status makes no difference.

The list is just about endless when it comes to clubs and interest groups both inside and outside the church. In these groups, the usual topic of conversation is whatever the group is about, so whether a person is single or married makes little difference.

Available Roles in Host Country

In many host countries where unmarried missionaries serve, marriage and parenting take more time out of people's lives, so married couples have less time for clubs or groups. In addition, far fewer such groups exist, especially in the single missionary's heart language. Therefore, it is much more difficult to find other roles which contribute to one's identity.

These roles can range from variations of parental and spousal roles to those quite unrelated.

- Godparents. For centuries in many Christian denominations godparents have been responsible for things ranging from the child's baptism to his or her religious education. A male godparent is a godfather (in the classical sense, not the "mob" sense), and a female godparent is a godmother. Regardless of age unmarried missionaries can play this "parental" role.
- Aunts and Uncles. Family names and their roles are played by other members of the agency. Unmarried men about the age of the parents are often called "Uncle ____" and unmarried women are often called "Aunt ____" Sometimes older men and women are called Grandpa and Grandma.
- BFF (Best Friends Forever). A current term people who text use for individuals in a David and Jonathan relationships is BFF. Such a person is one who is always there for you no matter what happens. With the

commitment of agape love and the intimacy of phileo love such people are invaluable assets.

- Mentoring. Whether being mentored or doing the mentoring, either role in these wonderful relationships gives one a sense of identity.
- Colleague. Close relationships with others at your own level, such as fellow teachers, fellow physicians, are roles that give identity to those who are playing them.
- Face-to-face relationships are usually the most meaningful. However, with skype or other such means at our disposal free of charge, such relationships may be valuable and enduring.
- Connections with Christian nationals may be very rewarding and fulfilling. They may name their children after you or become "Mom" and "Sis" to you. As such you become part of their family.

Chapter 6

Sexual Fantasy

As Bill was teaching a group of youth about modesty, one of the unmarried young women who had a child opened her blouse and began nursing the baby with her breasts in plain sight. Bill knew that his host country had different standards, but he had not expected this right here in the church, and he could not keep his mind from wandering.

As Mary was walking along the street, a man coming toward her unzipped his pants, turned toward the building and urinated in plain sight. She thought she was prepared for anything, but this sudden frontal nudity made it hard to control her thoughts. Back home the man would be charged with indecent exposure.

While getting some R & R on a “family friendly” beach, a group of single missionaries saw several women in topless swimming suits and couples wearing little and touching each other all over.

Thoughts following such incidents are real and very important issues in the lives of single missionaries. Here are some questions that need answering.

Doesn't everyone think about sex?

Perhaps not all singles daydream about sex, but almost

all do. Way back in the 1930s two psychologists asked nearly 200 single college students if they had ever daydreamed about certain topics and if they had recently done so. Sex was near the top of the list, and there was little difference between the men and the women. Among the men, 97% reported having had sexual daydreams, and among the women 96% reported having had them.

Only three or four percent reported not having sexual daydreams in those days before television, the internet, and DVDs were available. Research shows that such fantasy certainly has not decreased since then! There probably are a few people who have little or no interest in sex, but the vast majority of people, including single missionaries, do think about it.

Does it hurt anything?

Several dangers are involved when people engage in sexual fantasy. Here are a few.

- It may be sinful, and this damages a person's relationship with God (more on this later).
- It often leads to unrealistic expectations so that people are disappointed when they marry. Actors appearing in pornography are posing and acting out the director's fantasy, so they do not look or act like “real people.”
- Such fantasy does not lead to long-term relationships with one person but to needing constant new stimuli involving different people. Readers discard or sell their pornographic magazines after a few weeks. That is why such magazines can publish new issues each month—the old ones become boring.

What does the Bible say?

Sexual fantasy is certainly nothing new, but such fantasy by large numbers of single adults is. While elaborating on the

commandment against adultery in the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus said, “But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart” (Matt. 5:28). Notice that Jesus was talking about adultery, not premarital sex. He was talking about sexual fantasy by married individuals. Remember that people could, and often did, marry as soon as they became sexually mature. Other than children 11 or 12 and under, there were few single people at that time in that culture.

Some people interpret this verse to mean that if they have a passing thought about sex with another person they have committed adultery. However, both Jesus and Paul used the same word describing themselves that is translated “lustfully” here in the Sermon on the Mount.

- At the Last Supper as Jesus spoke to his disciples he said, “I have strongly desired (lusted?) to eat this Passover with you before I suffer” (Luke 22:15).
- Writing to the Romans Paul said that he would not have known what coveting (lusting?) was “if the law had not said, ‘Do not covet (lust?)’” (Romans 7:7).

It is interesting to note that where the law said that, Deuteronomy 5:21 is translated “You shall not covet your neighbor’s wife. You shall not set your desire on your neighbor’s house or land...” Thus lusting is more than a passing glance or thought; it is also translated “strongly desired” or “set your desire on.”

Have things changed since Bible times?

As technology has changed over the years, so has the availability of materials to promote sexual fantasy.

- Millennia ago in Bible times erotic material was available in the forms of drawings, paintings, and carvings. These could be seen only by individuals or relatively small groups

- Centuries ago the invention of the printing press and moveable type made such material available to the masses in the form of books, magazines, posters and billboards.
- Decades ago with the invention of recordings on vinyl and tape such material became available in movies for theaters, tapes for home VCRs, and songs on vinyl disks and cassette tapes.
- In the last few years such material has been digitized and is available on CDs, DVDs, and even directly through the air.

Paul wrote to the Ephesians (2:2) about when they had followed the ways of the “ruler of the kingdom of the air.” People can now listen to the radio, watch TV, and download books from satellites. With wireless access they can access websites and email through the air. With their cell phones they have voice communication, texting, and sexting available, again literally through the air.

With this available literally to anyone, anywhere, at any time, even Christian workers access them. A *Christianity Today* survey found that 36% of USA pastors had a current problem with cyberporn. Several doctoral dissertations have found the percentage of missionaries at least that high, some even higher.

What about dreams while asleep?

Dreams are reported several times in the Bible, many of them at the beginning of Israel’s history in the Old Testament and at the beginning of the Christian faith in the New Testament. Some dreams are frightening, others are prophetic, and in still others writers portray God as speaking through dreams. No dreams are recorded as being sinful in Scripture.

Some individuals feel guilty about the sexual content of their dreams, but there is no Biblical evidence that God considers this sin. Dreams often reflect things people have been thinking about or doing. If a person has been engaging in sexual fantasy or immoral behavior, that may be responsible for

the dream; however, the sin is in the lust or immorality, not in the dream.

What can single missionaries do?

One thing single missionaries ought to do is to distinguish between temptation and sin. Everyone experiences temptation, but not everyone must sin. Jesus experienced sexual temptations, but he did not sin (Hebrews 4:15). King David experienced sexual temptations, and he did sin (2 Samuel 11:2-3).

Temptation itself is not sin, but yielding to it is sin. Most people know when they have crossed the line between temptation and sin. Unable to sleep and going for a walk, David noticed an attractive woman next door. This was temptation, not sin. The problem was that instead of looking away, David followed up on what he saw by inquiring about the woman. Then it was a slippery slope to adultery and murder.

Another thing people need to do is to make a specific commitment to God relative to sexual temptation and sin and do the following.

- Write it down and place the note in a prominent place like a mirror or computer screen.
- Often review scripture passages on the topic (Leviticus 18-21, 1 Corinthians 5-7), and keep renewing the mind (Ephesians 3, Colossians 4).
- Accept their own vulnerability (1 Corinthians 10:12).
- Take every thought captive (2 Corinthians 10:15).
- Think on good things (Philippians 4).

A third thing individuals should do is to avoid temptation when possible. Take steps to avoid common things leading to temptation such as those that follow.

- Entertainment: Certain movies, television shows, music, DVDs, CDs, and video games.
- Printed material: Particular books, magazines, newspapers, and catalogs.

- Digital material: Specific websites, chat rooms, You Tube, and other material on-line.
- Public material: Things you may run into in your daily life, such as billboards, posters, newsstands, and checkouts.

A fourth thing people need to do is to have a plan for how to react if their avoidance steps fail. No matter how hard individuals try, exposure to some sexual material will occur. Here are some suggested actions.

- Entertainment: Walk out, turn it off, change the station, throw it away.
- Printed material: Discard it, cancel the subscription, and take name off the mailing list.
- Digital material: Click to close the window, click another program on the tool bar.
- Change route immediately, bounce your eyes away, or close your eyes.

Finally, unmarried missionaries need accountability partners to meet with weekly. Face-to-face meetings are best, but if that is not possible weekly contact via skype is an acceptable alternative. They also need www.covenanteyes.com through which that accountability partner can hold them responsible for what they do on-line.

One can find good information in *Singled Out: Why Celibacy Must Be Reinvented in Today's Church* (2009) by Christine Colon and Bonnie Field (Brazos press, division of Baker).

Chapter 7

The Ticking Clock

The following conversation could take place between two unmarried missionaries who are not contented with their singleness and know each other very well.

Pat: "I'm beginning to wonder if I'll ever get married. I'm already 39 and even if I got married today, I'd be over 60 when my oldest child finishes college."

Chris: "That's nothing. I'm 39 too, and within a few years I may not even be able to have a child at all, even if I did get married."

Both Pat and Chris are keenly aware of their ticking biological clocks.

Male and/or Female Issue?

Both men and women get older, so these clocks are issues for both; however, they tend to be a greater issue for women than for men for three reasons.

- **Menopause.** Usually somewhere between 40 and 60 years of age women gradually stop menstruating and are unable to bear children. This is why Abraham and Sarah both laughed when God said she would bear a child (Genesis 17:17 and 18:12). Drastic hormonal changes also occur at this same time. Although some people talk about male menopause,

men may father children into their 80s, and hormonal changes slowly decline all during adulthood with no drastic changes at any particular age.

- **Ratio of single women to single men.** Among long-term missionaries today there are far more single women than single men. These ratios vary widely by agency, field, and team, but they often range from 3:1 to 7:1. With so many more women than men, it is less likely that women will find spouses while serving in a host culture.
- **Genetic birth defects.** Nearly everyone has met someone with Down Syndrome. The incidence of this defect increases with the age of the mother. At age 30 the chance is one in 1000, at age 35 the chance is one in 400, at age 40 the chance is one in 100, and at age 45 the chance is one in 30. Although the incidence also increases slightly each year with the father's age, the increase is trivial compared with the mother's age.

What is a woman to do if she wants to marry and have children? Likewise, what is a man to do? Here are several options with some of the major advantages and disadvantages of each.

Meet someone in the agency

This is often an excellent way to meet a spouse. People serving in the same agency are likely to have much in common. They usually have a similar call to service, similar values, similar beliefs, and both want to serve cross-culturally. All of these similarities, along with many others, are likely to lead to a strong marriage where both spouses are very happy in their marriage. Since there are so many more single women than single men, it is a great advantage for men.

Conversely, this fact is a great disadvantage to single women who want to marry and have children. For example, suppose an agency has three single women for every single man. If every single man marries one of the single women, then

two thirds of the single women will remain unmarried. Those are not very good odds.

Meet a national in the host country

Some single missionaries marry nationals living in the country where they are serving. The major advantages of this kind of marriage are that both have a common concern for the culture in which they are living, and often both are interested in serving God in that country as well. It is especially good for third culture kids (TCKs) who have grown up in that country or one with a similar culture.

The disadvantages include the deep cultural differences individuals often have on some important issues, such as male vs. female roles or honesty vs. saving-face. These differences may be very difficult to live with. The single woman may be attracted to the macho male in her host culture but may not like the way he dominates her after marriage. The single man may be attracted to the way the woman in his host culture avoids hurting anyone but may not like her lying to him to save face after marriage.

When children come along, more differences occur.

- Your children may not really know your parents, their grandparents.
- Family members, such as grandparents and cousins, may not be able to communicate well with your children.
- You may not celebrate your culture's holidays and observe its traditions.
- You may have to explain jokes and/or ask for them to be explained.
- Your children may grow up with a different set of cultural assumptions than you have.
- You may experience discrimination because of the ethnicity of your spouse.
- Your children may grow up with gender roles you do not approve of.

Meet someone in the passport country

When single missionaries marry someone from their passport country, they both bring the same cultural values they hold on important issues, such as male vs. female roles or honesty vs. saving-face. When they have children, their children will then internalize some of these same deeply held values themselves and have strong ties to their relatives in their passport culture. Of course they will become TCKs, so they will also internalize some values from the host culture.

The major disadvantage to marrying someone from back "home" is that person may not be willing to serve in another culture. Individuals may say that they are willing to go wherever the single missionary is called, but they may not want to do so after the marriage takes place. Single missionaries need to consider how strong their call to serve in another culture is.

Meet someone on E-harmony.com

After many years of teaching psychology, counseling, administration, research and writing at Fuller Theological Seminary, Neil Clark Warren founded e-harmony .com. He uses his "29 dimensions of compatibility" to match singles on the basis of common interests and deeply held values. Millions of singles fill out the survey, and then they are matched with others who score as being compatible with them.

The advantage to this is that if the test is correct and everyone tells the truth about themselves, single missionaries meet people who have many important things in common with them. Of course, it only matches singles with others likely to be compatible, and then the couple must spend much time with their match and with each other's families. E-harmony is just an introduction.

The disadvantage is that not everyone is honest in what they say when taking any such instrument. Although many may

answer the survey with complete honesty, some others may bias their answers toward what they would like to be, toward what they would like in a mate, or just tell outright lies. There is no way to screen people filling out surveys on-line or even be sure that they did not have a “friend” fill it out for them. Caution is the best advice.

Remain Single

Both Jesus and Paul advocated remaining single. Jesus gave three reasons people did not marry and ended by saying that those who could accept it should do so (Matthew 19: 10-12). In 1 Corinthians 7 Paul made eight positive statements about remaining single (verses 1, 8, 26-27, 32, 34, 38, and 39-40). Remaining single and contented in your singleness is pleasing to God, and it is far better than marrying the wrong person.

Likewise, both Jesus and Paul realized that not everyone could live the single life. When his disciples suggested that it would be better not to marry, Jesus said that not everyone could accept this (Matthew 19:11). Paul said that marriage would help people avoid immorality, that people who could not control themselves and burned with passion, and that a man acting improperly toward his fiancé should marry (1 Corinthians 7: 2, 9, and 36).

Paul advised Timothy specifically about widows who should and should not remain single. He said that only widows over 60, faithful to their husbands and known for their good deeds should be put on the list of widows cared for by the church (1 Timothy 5:9-10). However, he said that widows under 60 should not be on the list because their sensual desires would make them want to marry. Paul said that he counseled these younger widows to marry, to have children, and to manage their homes (1 Timothy 5:11-15).

There is hope!

Among missionaries who are not contented in singleness, some individuals who believe their time is running out on the ticking clock may think that marriage and parenthood is hopeless. However, marriage is always possible, and parenthood by adoption is always possible. Furthermore, both marriage and biological parenthood is possible later than many think, though the risks may be greater.

I know one woman who spent nearly two decades in cross-cultural service unmarried. She had never been married, but when she said, "I do," she instantly became wife, mother, mother-in-law, and grandmother. Most women gradually move into those roles one at a time over two or three decades. She spent the first year of her married life back in her passport country adjusting to these new roles, thankful for the blessings God had given her. There is hope!

I know another couple who met while serving with two different agencies in a host culture. Though neither had ever married, they dated and married in their late forties and had twin boys (their own) in their early fifties! They continue to serve in their host culture as they rear their sons and seek God's blessing on their family. There is hope for people who want to marry and are not contented in their singleness!

Chapter 8

Housing

When a family arrives on a field of service in the host country, there is seldom any question about housing. The whole family lives in one residence, usually with no one else in the house or apartment. However, when an unmarried person arrives, housing may be a question. It seems to “make sense” to have two or more singles share a residence to save money, and also they are not as likely to be lonely.

However, although two people from the same culture may share cultural values, they may still bring very different family and personality backgrounds. When two people from different cultures are serving on a multi-cultural team and asked to share a residence, even their cultural values will not be the same. The more people, and the more differences between people living in the same residence, the more likely is conflict.

Following are some advantages and disadvantages of various housing arrangements, some suggestions to make them work, and a danger to avoid.

Living Alone, Your Choice

If your agency has no requirements or subtle pressures (or some not so subtle) about your living circumstances and you choose to live alone, that usually works well. If you are enough

of an introvert to be most comfortable when alone, do not like being disturbed, and your passport culture values privacy, you will probably be very happy living alone.

If you are enough of an extrovert to want someone around all the time or are from a culture that values togetherness/community, you may find living alone very stressful. If this is your first time to live alone, you may not have realized how much extra work is required to cook, clean, do maintenance, care for the lawn, etc. You may find that the extra funds needed to live alone strain your budget. If so, find a roommate when your lease is up.

Living with Friend, Mutual Idea

If you and a friend both want to share a house or large apartment, this usually works as long as all goes well with the friendship. If both of you like someone around much of the time it saves money, saves time, and decreases loneliness. Since you were already friends and both came up with the idea, you are likely to work together to maintain the friendship

Unfortunately, there may be a couple of drawbacks. First, the friendship may cool with constant contact. In fact, living together may ruin a friendship. Living together is quite different from spending several hours a day having fun. Your friend may not want to help with cooking and cleaning, want to talk “all the time,” want the two of you to buy an expensive piece of furniture, etc. Second, the friendship may gradually change until it leads to physical intimacy, a problem dealt with later.

Living with an “Acquaintance,” Agency’s “Suggestion,” Your “Choice”

The quotation marks above mean that the enclosed words may have various meanings. If you know the person well, you know that you can live alone if you prefer to, and you

have your choice of several people that you really like, this may go well.

However, if the acquaintance is someone you met two weeks ago, the suggestion feels more like pressure to you, and your choice is because the alternative is even worse, the arrangement is not likely to succeed.

When people feel like they do not have full freedom to do something, they develop psychological reactance. This means that they have a negative emotional reaction and are motivated to reestablish the freedom. This goes way back to the Garden of Eden. God told the man that he could eat fruit from any tree in the garden except one. Of course, after that, he wanted to eat fruit from that tree—and did so (Genesis 2-3). Another example is that a child may have no interest in any of several toys in front of him, but as soon as another child picks one up (no longer freely available), the child wants that one.

Living with a “Stranger,” Agency’s “Requirement,” Agency’s “Choice”

Although this may sometimes work, it is much more likely to fail than to succeed. If you do not know someone, the agency requires you to live with someone, and the agency picks who you live with, you are not likely to enjoy living with that person.

Suggestions to Make It Work

If you find yourself in the situation of having to live with someone rather than alone, remember that you will have a period of adjustment even longer than a newly married couple who know each other from their period of courtship. It will take much time and patience with each other as you adjust to this living situation. Here are some suggestions.

- Agree with each other that you are two different people and that you do not have to do everything together.

- Make it clear to other missionaries, both single and married, that you are two different people and you do not need to be invited to everything together.
- Feel free to turn down an invitation that your housemate is accepting if you just do not feel like going. You do not have to give a reason to justify your staying home.
- Each of you keep your own identity and be careful not to develop a joint identity at the expense of your own.
- Set aside a regular time, at least weekly to check with each other about how you feel like things are going. Make adjustments as necessary.
- Call in a third party in which each of you has confidence if you cannot come to a mutual agreement between the two of you (Matthew 18).
- Remember that missionaries move a lot so a bad situation is temporary—but so is a good one. Flexibility is a must.
- Regardless of how busy you are, set aside time to pray together and agree not to let “small stuff” in your relationship become big things.

Potential Danger

Could two missionaries begin a homosexual relationship? Yes, they can, and it can happen with either men or women, married or single, young or old. As a result of isolation and loneliness, single missionaries living together with same-sex partners may form emotionally dependent relationships. These rather exclusive relationships may become possessive and lead to physical activity with sexual elements. An embrace may become more than just comforting. This may progress into homosexual activity, so that the people involved have progressed from a healthy, loving relationship into a sinful relationship.

Although the Bible does not say as much about homosexual behavior as it does about adultery and sexual

immorality, both Old and New Testaments have clear statements about its sinfulness.

- Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13 say that it is abominable for two men to have homosexual relations, and that both would be put to death.
- Romans 1:26-27 says that it is wrong for two women to have homosexual relations, and likewise it is wrong for two men. This passage talks about both burning in lust for each other and committing what is shameful.

This can happen either between two men or between two women; however, it is more likely to happen between two women for two reasons.

- First, there are far more single women than single men on most mission fields. Therefore, there are many more female couples sharing living quarters than male couples, so more chances for it to occur.
- Second, gay men are generally far more promiscuous than are lesbian women. Gay men typically have a few sexual contacts with each of dozens or scores of different men. Lesbian women typically form rather long-lasting relationships with many sexual contacts with one or a few different women.

Even if sexual attraction does not progress to actual sexual behavior, confusion, guilt feelings, and the relationship itself need to be carefully examined. As with heterosexual attraction and/or behavior, people must make the distinction between temptation and sin.

If some homosexual activity does take place, people need to make the distinction between one act of sinful behavior and a gay or lesbian lifestyle. Since one-time homosexual activity is more likely to occur during adolescence at the height of the sexual drive in men, it is usually seen as an experimental thing. However, since the sexual drive peaks later in women and an experimental homosexual experience may occur then, it may seem more threatening.

Although one such act is sinful and requires God's forgiveness, it does not mean that the person is living a homosexual lifestyle, that they are gay or lesbian. It may mean only that they have tried out such activity.

Since such activity is sinful, several things need to be done if it occurs.

- The people involved need to confess their sin, repent of it, and trust God for forgiveness.
- To prevent it from happening again, they need to take steps to avoid it. The major thing is to make changes in their lives which will decrease the opportunities. That is, not spend time alone together, but spend time in groups, etc.
- This may mean not living together in the same house or apartment.
- Both people need to find someone to hold them accountable on at least a weekly basis.

It Can Work.

Two single missionaries can live in the same house for many years with great success. Jeannie Lockerbie Stevenson dedicated her excellent book, *By Ones & by Twos* to her good friend "with whom I shared a home for more than 25 years."

Chapter 9

Matchmakers

Junko had served cross-culturally for nearly three years. Knowing that her parents disapproved of what she was doing, one Sunday after the service her pastor told her that he would be glad to help her find a husband. She was delighted and thanked him profusely. She wanted to marry but just did not know how to go about finding a husband because her host culture did not seem to have any way for her to find a mate.

Bill, also single, served with a different agency but attended the same church. A couple of weeks later the pastor suggested to him that he might want to date Junko. Rather than being grateful, Bill politely told the pastor to “mind his own business.” He had previously thought of asking Junko, but this “pressure” by the pastor made him change his mind.

Why did Junko and Bill react so differently? The basic answer is that they were from different cultures, Junko from an Eastern one and Bill from a Western one.

Matchmakers

Matchmakers are usually defined as those who bring two unmarried individuals together in an attempt to promote a marriage. Traditionally these matchmakers may range anywhere from individuals who invite two people over for

dinner, hoping that a romantic relationship will develop, to those who are certified matchmakers who make their living getting couples together. Today matchmakers also include internet dating services which attempt to match people on a variety of criteria.

Such matchmakers may be appreciated and accepted or despised and rejected. A 1977 *Webster's Twentieth Century Dictionary* defines matchmakers as those who arrange marriages but adds “or try to do so by scheming.” Such scheming matchmakers are often rejected with little consideration.

Matchmakers in the Bible

Several kinds of matchmakers appear in the pages of the first books of both the Old and New Testaments. People today often think that such marriages do not involve love, but many of them resulted in loving relationships.

- Abraham asked his most trusted servant to be a matchmaker to find a wife for his son, Isaac. This servant found a woman that fit the criteria Abraham gave, Isaac married Rebekah, and he loved her (Genesis 24).
- Isaac did not get a matchmaker or give any input regarding Esau's wives. These marriages were a source of grief to both parents, Isaac and Rebekah (Genesis 26:34-35; 27:46).
- Isaac gave Jacob (his other son) specific instructions about who he should marry, Jacob followed the instructions, and he had a loving marriage with Rachel (Genesis 28-29:30).
- Laban, Rachel's father, was a scheming matchmaker, and it resulted in a marriage to Jacob, one in which Leah did not feel loved (Genesis 29:31-34).
- The matchmaker is not named, but Mary and Joseph were pledged (betrothed) to be married before she was pregnant with Jesus. Although he did not understand what was happening, Joseph must have loved Mary deeply because he

wanted to break the betrothal quietly so she would not be disgraced (Matthew 1:18-19).

Matchmakers since Bible Times

Many cultures before, during, and since Bible times have included matchmakers as one of the principal ways singles could meet each other. The roles of matchmakers varied widely across cultures. In some cultures most singles met their prospective spouses through matchmakers, so it was common throughout the culture. In other cultures only royalty or upper class people met through matchmakers.

Such matchmaking continued for another 1800 years. However, as adolescence was being invented in Europe and North America, matchmaking there became less common. As individualism increased, the idea of having someone else (matchmaker), perhaps chosen by yet someone else (parents), choose one's spouse became less and less popular. What was once common has become rather rare as two major changes occurred in Western culture during the last two centuries.

The first change in the use of matchmakers took place in Europe and North America as Western culture invented adolescence. Simultaneous with gradually requiring everyone to live their teen years as singles, Western culture gradually eliminated the use of matchmakers. This change took place between 1850 and 1950.

Fiddler on the Roof, long-running musical on Broadway and Academy Award-winning movie, is set in 1905 czarist Russia. It begins with the song "Tradition" followed by the song "Matchmaker." In it a poor Jewish milkman struggles with the loss of tradition while his three oldest daughters struggle with what is left of it relative to matchmakers finding them husbands. Each of the three strong-willed teenagers' choice of a husband moves further and further from the customs of their father's faith.

The second change is occurring now, a century later at the turn of the 21st century, but it is taking place more rapidly and is an increasing use of matchmakers of a different kind. Rather than parents finding a friend, relative, or professional matchmaker, singles who want to marry are increasingly turning to Internet dating services which match people for marriage. In fact, one such service has chosen to call itself Matchmaker.com.

Using the New Matchmakers

Singles who decide to use these new matchmakers, Internet dating services, need to do so carefully. In the American justice system people are assumed to be innocent until proven guilty. Internet dating needs to be viewed the opposite; assume people to be guilty until you have carefully determined that they are innocent.

Do not assume that Christian workers are innocent. I was at staff meeting in a church when a new youth pastor wanted to use volunteers before they had attended the church for six months (church policy). He ended his plea saying, "They are seminary students, so they must be OK." The pastor replied, "In the five years I have been here we have had three incidents, and all three perpetrators have been seminary students." Here are some suggestions.

- Choose wisely. Internet dating services vary widely. eHarmony.com is very popular among missionaries. This is probably because it emphasizes long-term relationships, was developed by a Christian psychologist teaching at a Christian graduate school, and matches singles on the basis of their answers to many items in a research-validated questionnaire .
- Remain anonymous. Use an email address that does not include your name or agency and a phone that cannot be traced to you.
- Do a background check. This may seem unromantic, but remember that all information was supplied by the person.

You can do your own check on the Internet or pay for one that may be more thorough.

- Meet for the first time in public and do not end the meeting by going to either of your homes.
- Tell someone who you are going to meet, where you are going, and when you plan to return from that first meeting.
- Drive yourself, take your cell phone, and don't leave personal things unattended at that first meeting.
- If meeting far away, stay in a hotel, use taxi or rental car, and keep family and friends posted by phone calls or texting.
- Stop communicating if and when "red flags" appear.

Elaborations on these suggestions and additional ones are available at match.com under "Online Dating Safety Tips."

Red Flags

Watch for these "red flags" that may indicate a predator or fraud. You may not consider these to be "red flags," so if any happen, it would be best to ask a trusted friend if they may indicate a problem when a potential date...

- Asks for financial information, such as credit card numbers or bank information.
- Pressures you for personal information, such as your phone number, address, or Social Security number.
- Asks for your address, even to send flowers or gifts.
- Asks for money in any form, especially if he or she asks for it to be wired.
- Claims to be recently widowed and needing companionship.
- Talks about destiny or "fate" relative to meeting you.
- Includes grammar or spelling errors, especially those which would be rare for someone writing in his or her first language.

Responses to Self-Appointed Matchmakers

Finally, here are some suggested ways to respond to people who take it upon themselves to be matchmakers for you.

- Colleagues from your passport culture. The best way to respond to unwanted matchmaking when expatriate friends try it is just as you would at home. However, do remember that you will be interacting with them over years to come, so respond politely and respectfully. They probably want to help, not to harm or offend.
- Multi-cultural teammates. In these days of multicultural teams, others serving with your agency may attempt to find a match for you. Remember that they probably mean well, but they just do not understand that singleness is a viable option, especially if they come from cultures where it is shameful or really bad.
- Nationals. The same is true as for nationals where you serve. If singleness is frowned on, such nationals probably mean well and just do not understand. There may be unspoken expectations on the part of the matchmaker involving saving "face" should a match not go as hoped. There may be pressure after accepting the initial "set-up."

Chapter 10

Contentment and Comparison

Suppose this happened. On his way home Bill, a single missionary, waved at Tom and Ruth playing with their children in front of their big house. As he went into his apartment, he realized how small it really was. It was big enough for him, but he barely had space to turn around in his kitchen. He surely could use more space.

Mary, another single missionary, followed Bill into the neighborhood and waved to Tom and Ruth as well. As she went into her apartment, she realized how lonely it was with no one else there. She would really like someone to care for her and laugh with her like Tom did with Ruth.

Bill and Mary are not contented with things just as they are. The thing that brought their discontent into consciousness was the sight of Tom and Ruth at their house. Anyone can have feelings of discontent, but single missionaries may feel it about different things than do married missionaries, and they have no one to talk with about it.

The Bible on Contentment

Paul, a single missionary, wrote a supporting church that he had learned to be content whatever the circumstances. He knew what it meant to have plenty as well as to be in need, and

he had learned the secret of being content in any and every situation (Philippians 4:11-12). Note that this was something he learned, not something that came naturally, and that ability applied to whatever happened.

He also wrote to a young missionary pastoring a church he had planted during a stay of several years in Ephesus. Paul wrote, "Godliness with contentment is great gain" (1 Timothy 6:6). The only other place that word for "contentment" is used in the Bible is where Paul wrote to another church he planted. It is the "having all you need" in the following passage: "in all things at all times having all you need you will abound in every good work" (2 Corinthians 9:8). That is contentment!

Results of Contentment

Contentment DOES NOT mean

- Bearing your "cross" of singleness
- Tolerating singleness
- Enduring singleness
- Grudgingly accepting singleness
- Etc.

Contentment DOES mean

- Satisfaction in serving God
- Deep joy within
- Gratitude to God

Here are some examples in the Bible.

- Rejoicing even when expectations are not met (Habakkuk 3:17-18)
- Rejoicing when persecuted (Acts 5:41)
- Singing hymns to God even when flogged and thrown into jail (Acts 16:23-25)
- Joyfully accepting property being confiscated (Hebrews 10:34)
- Rejoicing when suffering for Christ (1 Peter 4:12-13)

The Bible on Comparison

Jesus, a single that never married, talked in a parable about envious comparison destroying contentment. A landowner agreed to pay workers a denarius (a typical day's wage) for a day's work, and apparently they were satisfied with that because they went to work. Throughout the day more workers came to work. In the evening when the workers were paid, all of them received a denarius. Those who had agreed to work all day for a denarius were no longer contented when they compared their wages with the others (Matthew 20:1-16). When they objected, the landowner asked them if they were envious because of his generosity.

Later, when Jesus told Peter about his future, Peter looked at another disciple and said, "Lord, what about him?" Jesus told Peter that was not any of his business; he was just to follow Jesus—not compare his future with anyone else's (John 21:16-22).

Results of Comparison

Jesus, in his parable about the workers in the vineyard, made it clear that a common result of comparison is envy. Envy can never result in gratification—no enjoyment, only endless self-torment as its appetite increases. Envy is not merely wanting another's goods but wanting to pull the other person down. This leads to resentment, backbiting, spite, slander, hatred, and even murder, as was the case with Cain and Abel (Genesis 4:2-8).

The relative deprivation principle maintains that people tend to overlook the ways in which they are relatively better off than others and to focus only on the ways in which they think others are better off. Thus they devalue their own gifts and blessings while overvaluing others. This only feeds their discontent!

Envious people do not even really love themselves. They are not grateful for, or happy in, what they are or what they have. This sin is deadly because it will not let people live as themselves, grateful for the qualities and talents that God has given them, and making the best and most rewarding use of those gifts. Their degradation of others is a reflection of their degradation of themselves and their gifts. These people wind up alienated from themselves as well as others and "miss the party" like the elder brother of the prodigal son in Luke 15.

Furthermore, envy may lead to coveting, the last of the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20:17). There God gave not only a general command not to covet what another person has, but specified several things.

- House
- Spouse
- Servant
- Animals

As long as Bill, mentioned at the beginning, just wanted housing with more space he was not coveting, but if and when he reached the point at which he wanted the house where Tom and Ruth lived, he was violating the tenth commandment. This may then lead to taking steps to get that house, possibly causing problems within the whole team serving on that city.

As long as Mary just wanted a husband, she was not coveting. However, if she began wanting Tom as her husband, she had begun coveting, and this may lead to terrible results. This may lead not only to team problems, but also to the breakup of a marriage and children suffering from the effects of divorce.

Of course, even though married individuals have a spouse, they may also begin coveting someone else's spouse. Not having a spouse, singles may be even more likely to begin coveting. As soon as attraction to a married person begins, singles must take steps to prevent it from growing. As attraction grows, it becomes a slippery slope down which people slide and become irrationally willing to give up

everything for that other person—even if it means breaking up families, derailing missionary careers, and living in sin.

What to Do

Few people readily admit their sin of envy. It is so filled with self, wanting something simply because someone else has it, that it is clearly mean and nasty. Whenever we notice differences between us and others, we are likely to begin making comparisons, and those comparisons often lead to envy. Since few of us escape feelings of envy, what can we do when the Spirit makes us aware of our envy? What can we do to avoid falling into this trap?

- Confess and repent. As with any other sin, we are to confess it, and God has promised to forgive (1 John 1). If we deny our sin, we deceive ourselves and remain in it. When we are forgiven, we are to repent, not only to feel sorrow for the wrong we have done but also to turn from the sin itself. Following are ways to help you turn from envy, to avoid rather than be trapped by it.
- Compare self with self. If you must make comparisons, compare yourself with yourself. Galatians 4:6 says, “Each man should examine his own conduct for himself; then he can measure his achievement by comparing himself with himself and not with anyone else.” Compare your apartment, salary, vehicle, and so forth now with what you had 10 or 20 years ago, not with what married missionary colleagues now have.
- Compare with those who have less. Rather than comparing yourself with married missionaries who have more, compare yourself with people you serve who have less. Compare your apartment with the living conditions of the homeless. Compare your salary with the unemployed and nationals you serve. Compare your vehicle with those who have no vehicle at all. Just as comparing yourself with those who are better off creates envy, so comparing yourself with those

less well-off increases contentment. In fact, as you “count your blessings,” you may be motivated to share them with others who have less. Such sharing will increase your satisfaction even more!

- Accept that nothing (no thing) brings lasting joy and contentment. No matter what you have, you will soon adapt to it and want something “better,” whether it is housing, spouse, salary, vehicle, position, language ability, and so forth. Research in the late 20th century showed that relationships were most highly correlated with happiness.

Romans 12:1 urges people to offer themselves as living sacrifices as an act of service. This is pleasing to God and results in contentment for the person. Doing so usually involves two parts. First, one needs to make an open-ended general surrender to God of everything that is to come up in the future. Second, as unexpected specific things appear after that, the person may have to update and revise that surrender to include the attractive new things.

Although you cannot find joy, satisfaction, and contentment by pursuing these things, contentment may find you as you are careful about comparisons, avoid envy, and keep the Great Commandment to love God and to love others as you love yourself.

Appendices

Many people reading this book are most interested in the practical applications in the previous chapters. However, to really understand why they should take the actions suggested there, singles need to understand how the current situation has developed. Not knowing how it developed is like reading one of the New Testament epistles without knowing what happened in the Old Testament, the gospels, and the book of Acts. Singles who reviewed the chapters as they were being written suggested that some chapters be moved to the back of the book as appendices because people reading the book may think it is all about history and quit before reaching the practical material.

These appendices are here to help readers understand how Western culture has changed during the last two centuries. They are not a call to return to what existed for thousands of years before our culture changed. That is probably impossible; and even if it were possible, it would likely take another two centuries to change back.

At the end of the traditional Bar Mitzvah when his son is thirteen years and one day old, the Jewish father's benediction was, "Blessed is He who has now freed me from the responsibility of this one." Many fathers today may think that sounds great; however, now parents in much of Western culture are responsible until their "children" are 18.

Along the same line, in the nineteenth century Massachusetts required that no state money be used "for the support of any male person, over the age of twelve, and under

the age of sixty years, while of competent health to labor" (*Laws of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts*, 1823). People over twelve were expected to support themselves. Imagine what would be said about any state in the United States if it denied welfare to all males over the age of 12!

Even if laws were changed so that parents and the state were not responsible for teenagers, arranged marriages at puberty would still be impossible.

- The minimum legal age of marriage would need to be changed.
- Laws forbidding "child" labor would have to be changed.
- Laws requiring people to attend school would have to be changed.
- Laws inventing juvenile delinquency would have to be changed so that teens would be legally responsible.
- Children would have to be taught "life skills" by the time they reached puberty.
- Adults would have to expect responsible behavior from their offspring after puberty.

The list could go on and on, but it is clear that Western culture cannot return, at least not in a short time, to what life was like several centuries ago. Therefore, we need to develop ways to cope with these changes in our culture.

Appendix A

The New Singleness

In the second chapter of the Bible God told Adam and Eve that a man would leave his parents and be united to his wife (Genesis 2:24). Since that time some individuals have married and others have remained single.

Many differences in marriage customs have developed in various cultures over the centuries. However, two things remained relatively unchanged for thousands of years in the development of Western culture: who people marry and when they marry. Only during the past couple of centuries have changes occurred in these two things to create the new singleness.

Old Testament Times

As translated 400 years ago in the King James Version of the Bible, Leviticus 19:29 reads, “Do not prostitute thy daughter to cause her to be a whore.” The same verse in the New International version says, “Do not degrade your daughter by making her a prostitute.” It seems inconceivable that a father could ever do that. How could this be?

The Talmud, essentially a commentary on the Old Testament, particularly the first five books, may shed some light

on this verse. Here are the comments of some Jewish rabbis centuries ago.

- R. Akiba: “This refers to the delay in marrying off a daughter who is already a *bogereth* (past puberty).” A footnote explains, “Having attained puberty, she may become unchaste if not married” (Sanhedrin 76a).
- R. Kahna: “The only poor in Israel is the subtly wicked and he who delays in marrying off his daughter, a *bogareth*.” (Sanhedrin 76a).
- R. Abaye: “Which poor man is subtly wicked? He who delays marrying off his daughter, a *bogereth*” (Sanhedrin 76b).
- The next paragraph states that a good man “leads his children in the right path and marries them just before they attain puberty” (Sanhedrin 76b).

These comments from the teachers of the law make two things clear about the culture at the time of the Talmud. First, parents were responsible to find spouses for their children. Second, ideally marriage should take place as soon as children became adults and were sexually mature. Marriages were arranged, and they took place about the age of puberty.

Under ancient Hebrew law the minimum legal age of marriage was 12 for women and 13 for men. This was formalized later when women went through bat mitzvah at 12 and men through bar mitzvah at 13. Of course, not everyone married at 12 and 13, but they could if their parents found them a spouse and wanted them to marry.

New Testament Times

At the beginning of the New Testament we find that the parents of Mary, mother of Jesus, had carried out their responsibility. Mary was “engaged” to be married to Joseph. She had also passed puberty because she was pregnant (Matthew 1:24). She was probably in her teen years and her marriage had been arranged by her parents.

Under Roman law at that time men could marry at 14 and women at 12. When a Roman woman reached her thirteenth year, her parents began to look for a husband for her. Any woman not married by 19 was distinctly an “old maid.”

As it developed, the Roman Catholic Church followed the same general principles. In the early Middle Ages the church said that at puberty males should either marry or “embrace ecclesiastical continence.” Later in the Middle Ages the church recognized the marriages of men 13.5 and women 12.5 years old.

England

Arranged marriages were still the norm in 16th century England. The minimum legal age of marriage was still 12 and 14, although the arrangements were often made years before.

- “She could never fansie or cast favour to hym, nor never will do;...she sais she knowis not, but bie the sayenge of her father & mother, forther, she sais, she was married to hym bieceuse her frendes thought she shuld have had a lyvinge bie hym;...” [sic] (Elizabeth Hulse seeking a divorce from George Hulse, married at 4 and 11).
- “That he would refuse to take the said Margaret to weif; and that he would not consent to the said marriage which was solemnized in his minoritie...”[sic] (Roland Dutton refusing to carry out the contract, made at 9 and 5, of marriage to Margaret Stanley).

Note that these were arranged marriages, not forced marriages. In England children could be betrothed as infants, but the agreement could be broken until the child was 10 with no penalty for anyone. However, if the contract was broken when the child was between 10 and 12, the parents were fined. Both the parents and the “child” could be fined if the contract was broken when the “child” was over 12. At the age of 12 “children” were considered responsible enough to be fined for breach of contract.

Colonial America

The minimum legal age of marriage was still 12 and 14. Here are some quotes from American history.

- 1704, Connecticut: “They generally marry very young, the males oftener as I am told under twenty years than above.”
- Pioneer Kentucky: “A marriage that sometimes united a boy of sixteen to a girl of fourteen was an occasion of merriment that brought out the whole fort.”
- “The girls of North Carolina married so early that grandmothers of twenty-seven years of age were frequently found.”

The Puritans in colonial America recognized the power of the sexual drive and saw to it that their children married as soon as possible, the best way to prevent premarital sex and sexual perversion.

They disagreed with the Roman Catholics who “ensnared” their children in vows of virginity. Thomas Cobbett, a Puritan, wrote that such people “not being able to contain,” would be guilty of “unnatural pollutions, and other filthy practices in secret; and too oft of horrid murthers of the fruit of their bodies.” [sic]

The New Singleness

For thousands of years the most common practice was for parents to find a spouse for their children and arrange marriage at about the age of puberty. However, between the middle of the 19th and 20th centuries Western culture made major changes.

Three Changes

Three changes occurred which had two major consequences relative to singleness.

First, in 1882 Parliament raised the age at which women could marry from 12 to 13 (an attempt to raise it to 16 failed). However on August 14, 1885, Parliament raised the age from 13 to 16 under pressure from the London Salvation Army. In 1926 Westermarck wrote that marriage at puberty is only among “uncivilized races.” In 1934 Goodsell wrote that laws permitting marriage at 12 and 14 should have disappeared from the laws of “enlightened states,” that such laws were a “social stupidity.” Most states at that time required women to be 18 and men to be 21 to marry. What was considered normal for thousands of years was labeled as uncivilized, unenlightened, and socially stupid.

Second, a summary of 218 studies between 1795 and 1981 concerning the age at which 220,037 women had their first menstrual period was published in 1983 in the *New England Journal of Medicine*. This first period is very near puberty in women. This study showed that during these years the average age of puberty for women declined from about 16 to about 12. Puberty in men is not as obvious, but other evidence shows about the same change in men. For example, when Bach was choir-master in Leipzig, choirboys sang soprano until they were 17 or older. Today this change comes at about 14. At the same time that laws were passed to increase the age of marriage by six or seven years, people were reaching the age of puberty three or four years earlier.

Third, though we do not have legal records or physiological data to show exactly when it happened, arranged marriages became less common during this same time period. Though arranged marriages were common in colonial America, they were rare by the middle of the twentieth century.

Two Consequences

The three changes that happened between the middle of the 19th and 20th centuries had the following two major consequences relative to singleness.

First, everyone is now required by law to live part of his or her adult life as a single. No longer is a person allowed to marry at the age of puberty. This has social implications for all kinds of relationships such as friendships, sexuality, and loneliness.

Second, people can no longer blame their parents or anyone else for either their spouse or for the fact that they are not married. That blame game for the arranged marriage goes back to the very beginning. When God confronted Adam about his disobedience, Adam said, “The woman you put here with me—she gave me some...” (Genesis 3:12).

Likewise if a person was not married, he or she could blame parents for not making the arrangements or having an appropriate dowry. Also in Genesis we find that Laban wanted to be careful not to be blamed for Leah not having a husband, so the evening of the wedding Laban slipped Leah into bed with Jacob (Genesis 29:22-30).

Today since each individual is responsible for marriage or singleness, he or she has no one to blame but has to accept the responsibility for the chosen spouse or the singleness.

Appendix B

Is Singleness OK?

In *By Ones & by Twos* Jeannie Lockerbie Stephenson reveals how she was once told that she had “done more in this area than any other single person.” She thought that meant that no other one person had accomplished as much as she had. Later she found out that the speaker meant that no other unmarried person had done as much—implying that married people do more than unmarried ones!

Here are some questions that unmarried missionaries have been asked either by other missionaries or by nationals in cultures where marriage is expected.

- Are you gay? (implying homosexuality)
- Why aren’t you married? (implying that people of that age would be married unless something was wrong)
- Are you dating? (implying that if two unmarried people are doing something together, it must be more than just friendship)
- When do you plan to marry? (implying that everyone should marry)

Is there something wrong with unmarried missionaries? Are they immoral or inferior in some way? Here are some thoughts to consider.

Jesus

Although Jesus was not a missionary in the usual sense of taking the Good News from one culture to another here on earth, he certainly crossed cultures to create that Good News which missionaries proclaim today. Philippians 2 notes that Christ Jesus left his heavenly home and came to live here as a man in an earthly culture among human beings.

Having never married, Jesus was a single, and he did nothing immoral or inferior. If our Lord lived all his life as a single, there is certainly nothing wrong with that.

Paul

The Apostle Paul was the most famous and influential missionary in the Bible. In Acts he spent three terms of cross-cultural service and largely defined the movement in his discussions with those at headquarters in Jerusalem. Paul also wrote many letters to national churches and their pastors in various places. These letters are now books of the New Testament and are still influential 2000 years later.

Paul was single. When one of the national churches asked questions about marriage, Paul said that he wished everyone was single like he was (1 Corinthians 7:7). A couple of sentences later he told the unmarried that it was good for them to stay single as he was (1 Corinthians 7:8).

Paul, a successful and influential missionary, lived as a single and encouraged others to do the same. He did nothing immoral or inferior but was a shining example of cross-cultural work.

The Bible on Singleness

Both Jesus and Paul not only were single but also had something to say about singleness.

Jesus had been speaking to large crowds and healing people when some Pharisees asked Jesus a question about divorce. After Jesus answered the question, the disciples said that if what Jesus said was true, it would be better not to marry at all. (Matthew 19:10)

Jesus replied that only some people could accept this. He then elaborated that there were three reasons people did not marry.

- Some people are born without the capacity or desire for marriage.
- Other people are castrated and no longer have the capacity for marital relations.
- Still others do not marry because of the kingdom of heaven.

Jesus concluded by saying, “The one who can accept this should accept it” (Matthew 19:12). His answer implied that choosing not to marry to serve God better was not only acceptable but also pleasing to God.

Paul wrote extensively about singleness and marriage in response to questions from the church at Corinth. Here is what he said about remaining single in 1 Corinthians 7.

- It is good not to marry (v. 1).
- It is good for the unmarried and those whose spouses have died to stay unmarried (v. 8).
- If you are unmarried, do not look for a spouse (because of the crisis at the time people should not change marital status) (vv. 26-27).
- An unmarried man is more concerned about the Lord’s affairs, about how he can please God (v. 32)
- An unmarried woman is also more concerned about the Lord’s affairs, so she can be devoted to God both physically and spiritually (v. 34).
- The man who made up his mind, was not compelled, had control over his will, and has decided not to marry does the right thing (v. 38).

- The man who marries does right, but the man who does not marry does even better (v. 38).
- The woman whose husband dies is free to remarry a believer, but Paul believes she will be happier if she does not remarry (v. 39-40).

In contrast, here is what Paul said about getting married (rather than remaining single).

- Since there is so much immorality both men and women should marry to have their own spouses (v. 2).
- If people can’t control themselves, it is better to marry than to burn with passion (v. 9).
- People who marry will face many problems and Paul wanted to spare them from those problems (v. 28).
- A married man is more concerned about worldly affairs, how he can please his wife, and this divides his interests (v. 33).
- A married woman is also more concerned about worldly affairs, how she can please her husband (v. 34).
- If a man believes he is acting improperly toward his fiancé who is getting older, it is good for him to marry her (v. 36).

Jesus talked about people not marrying because of the kingdom of heaven. Paul’s elaboration on what Jesus said makes it clear that singleness is not inferior to marriage. In fact, it is very pleasing to God.

Roman Catholic Single Missionaries

For many centuries primarily single priests and nuns of the Roman Catholic Church spread the Good News about Jesus Christ around the world. These people had made vows to remain celibate, did quite literally what Jesus said, “They renounced marriage for the Kingdom of God” (Matthew 10:19). They remained single for the rest of their lives while they served as missionaries. They were not forbidden to marry, but they voluntarily chose to remain single so that they could better serve God.

The majority of these missionaries were single men serving in a variety of orders around the world for centuries. One of the most well known is St. Francis of Assisi who founded the Franciscan Order, and thousands of Franciscans have served nearly everywhere for the last 800 years.

Of course, there have also been single women who served as missionaries. Probably the most widely known one is Mother Teresa of Calcutta who was born in Albania and founded Missionaries of Charity in India. She was awarded the Nobel Peace prize in 1979.

Protestant Single Missionaries

After the Reformation, unlike the Roman Catholics, Protestant missionaries have been primarily married individuals. Furthermore, women have been the majority among those who are single. Single male missionaries are sometimes hard to find.

Probably the most well-known single Protestant male missionary was David Brainerd. Born in Connecticut, Brainerd was a missionary to the Delaware Indians in New Jersey until his death in 1747, 30 years before the USA became an independent nation. A well-known preacher, Jonathan Edwards, wrote an account of the life of David Brainerd which influenced missionaries such as William Carey (father of modern missions) and Adoniram Judson. Edwards' book has never gone out of print and is currently available not only in print but in digital format online free of charge or at a small price for E-readers such as Kindle or Nook.

Single Protestant female missionaries are relatively easy to find. Born in London at the beginning of the 20th century, Gladys Alyward strongly felt that God had called her to be a missionary to China. When turned down by the China Inland Mission, she spent all she had to get passage to China where she was revered among the people for her service. Although she was disappointed in the liberties taken in making the movie, she

became well-known while still alive when her story was portrayed in *The Inn of the Sixth Happiness*.

About a quarter of Protestant evangelical missionaries are single, and the vast majority of these are women. Although many married men serve as long-term missionaries, very few single men do. They may serve for a year or two, but they do not stay long enough to learn the language and culture of the people and develop personal relationships in which they disciple nationals.

Conclusion

Single missionaries have been and are extremely important. Imagine the world without the apostle Paul, without the priests and nuns of nearly 2000 years. Without single missionaries there would be far fewer Christians in the world today! Imagine losing a quarter of our current missionary force. Far fewer people would hear the Good News in the future.

Final note: During the latter part of the 20th century with the advent of airline transportation, short-term missionary trips or service ranging from a week or two to a year or two became popular. Single males are often found among these missionaries, but after their short-term of service, they typically leave the missionary force, but more single females return for further service.

Appendix C

Single Again

Can individuals who are married become single again?

The answer to this question has varied over the years. If they can become single again, this increases the number of singles in the population as a whole.

The Bible on Divorce

Both Testaments have passages on divorce. In the Old Testament Deuteronomy 24:1-4 notes that a man who wants to divorce his wife can write her a certificate of divorce, give it to her, and send her away. Then both he and she may remarry. For all practical purposes, they are single again with the only restriction being that if she marries another man and is divorced again, her first husband cannot remarry her.

The New Testament has several passages elaborating on this for Christians.

- Jesus elaborated on it in the Sermon on the Mount where he said that the only acceptable reason for divorce was marital unfaithfulness (Matthew 5:31-32).
- Later some Pharisees asked him to elaborate further, and Jesus said that the only reason God had allowed them to divorce was because of their hard hearts; however, it was

not supposed to be done, and the only acceptable reason was unfaithfulness (Matthew 19:1-12).

- Still later Paul, a single missionary writing to a church he had planted, said that God's command was that Christian husbands and wives must not divorce (1 Corinthians 7:10-14).

Thus divorce which was relatively easy for male Jews in the Old Testament became much more restricted for Christians in the New Testament. This prohibition of divorce changed little in Christianity during most of the next 2000 years.

Roman Catholic Church

In the Roman Catholic Church, which spread Christianity around the world through its single missionaries (nuns and priests) for centuries, marriage became a sacrament of the church. As such, divorce did not occur. In its place the church developed annulment, a procedure through which a marriage is declared null and void for a variety of reasons. The reasons given today are given in the Code of Canon Law, primarily canons 1083-1107.

Thus for more than 1500 years Christians technically did not divorce. Annulment did not break up a marriage; it declared that the "marriage" was invalid from the beginning; that there never was a real marriage to begin with. Since there was no marriage, there could be no divorce.

Of course, during these years the church, not the state, regulated marriages, so that the annulment was of no consequence relative to secular, civil law.

Early Protestants through the 19th Century

From the time of the Reformation through the 19th century marriage and divorce became more the responsibility of the government and less that of the church. Of course, clergy

still officiated at weddings, but people had to get a license from the state.

During the early years of Protestantism we have few reliable statistics, but divorce gradually became more and more acceptable. During the 19th century the USA federal government began estimating and collecting data on marriage and divorce rates, and the U. S. Census Bureau began publishing them annually in the *Statistical Abstract of the United States*. The following statistics are from various editions of this publication.

In 1867, the first year the statistics were published; for every divorce there were 32 marriages. If we look at this ratio every quarter of a century, we can see the steady rise in divorces. Little had changed by 1875 when there were 30 marriages for every divorce, but by 1900, there were only 13 marriages for every divorce, about half as many as 25 years earlier.

Changes in the 20th Century

First, the divorce trend begun in the last quarter of the 19th century continued through much of the 20th century.

- 1875: 1 divorce for every 30 marriages
- 1900: 1 divorce for every 13 marriages
- 1925: 1 divorce for every 7 marriages
- 1950: 1 divorce for every 4 marriages
- 1975: 1 divorce for every 2 marriages
- 2000: 1 divorce for every 2 marriages

Second, the meanings of “marital status” changed. Logically, a person is either married or unmarried (single). However, at the middle of the 20th century “singles” were commonly divided into three categories. Questions about marital status questions usually had four alternatives:

- Married (currently have spouse)
- Single (have never married)
- Divorced (was married, now divorced but not remarried)

- Widowed or Widower (was married but spouse deceased)
As time went on other categories of singles became rather common and confusion reigned as the census bureau tried to decide what to do. In the 1970s it coined the term “POSSLQ” (Persons of the Opposite Sex Sharing Living Quarters). As the practice of unmarried people living together grew rapidly, that term was gradually dropped in favor of “cohabitated.”

Third, before 1970, divorce was possible only if one of the partners could be shown at fault. For example, one spouse had to maintain that the other spouse was guilty of adultery, abandonment, a felony, or other such act. California’s no-fault divorce law went into effect in 1970, and divorces were granted if both spouses wanted to divorce or if one spouse said they had “irreconcilable differences.” Many other states followed in passing similar laws.

During that time “singleness” was not a reclaimable state. If you had married and for some reason were no longer married, you were never categorized as single again.

Today in the 21st Century

More than a decade into this century we can begin to see what is happening in it.

First, it appears that the divorce trend in the USA has continued to level off because the 2009 data (most recent available) is still 1 divorce for every 2 marriages. However, about 2000 the Census Bureau began not reporting divorce statistics for all states. A footnote to tables since 2000 says “Divorce figures exclude data for California, Georgia, Hawaii, Indiana, Louisiana, and Minnesota. Populations for divorce rates also exclude these states.”

Second, “single” today usually means that the person is not married to anyone at that particular time. However, the U. S. Census Bureau seldom uses the word “single.” Everyone is

either married or unmarried; however, the unmarried are divided into never married, widowed, and divorced.

Third, no-fault divorce laws have now been passed by all 50 states and the District of Columbia. The final state to pass such a law was New York, and the law passed there in 2010.

Implications

The major implication is that the number of singles has increased dramatically as a result of changes in divorce rate and the definition of “single” during the past two centuries.

First, there were 2,077,000 marriages in 2009, so that means there were probably more than a million divorces. Since each divorce produces two new singles, there were more than two million singles added to the population that year. And this happens every year. (Reminder: This data does NOT imply that half of all first marriages end in divorce. About 40% of the people married each year have already been married and divorced at least once, and the more times people have been divorced, the more likely they are to divorce again.)

Second, the increasing number of divorces relative to marriages clearly shows that our invention of adolescence and discarding of arranged marriages has not led to lasting happiness and long marriages. In fact, the opposite has happened. The divorce rate increased rather than decreased during the same years that adolescence was being invented.

Third, people who have been divorced or lost a spouse through death are now called “single” again. This does not actually increase the number of singles, but it does increase the number of people who are classified as singles, a technical point, but the number of these singles is steadily increasing. In fact, in England and Wales in 2007, for the first time ever, the number of single (never married), divorced, and widowed persons combined was larger than the number of married individuals. This has not yet occurred in the USA, but if current

trends continue, soon there will be more single adults than married adults in the States.

Fourth, now that all states have no-fault divorce laws, the number of divorces may further increase. However, we may never know whether they do or not. After publishing the number of marriages and divorces for more than a century in the *Statistical Abstract of the United States*, the Census Department now lists only the number of marriages and says that the number of divorces is NA (not available). Beginning in 1998 California and various other states (Colorado Indiana, Louisiana, Hawaii, etc.) did not supply the number of divorces. It is interesting that the state with the largest population and the first to pass a no-fault divorce law does not give the annual number of divorces.

Finally, now that no-fault divorce laws apply to everyone in the USA, we are basically back to where people were thousands of years ago when Moses wrote, “When the woman a man marries becomes displeasing to him because he finds something wrong with her, let him write her a certificate of divorce, give it to her, and send her out of his house” (Deuteronomy 24:1). The major difference now is that a woman may do the same thing to the man she has married.

Appendix D

Arranged Marriage

The picture of an 8-year-old wife posing beside her 27-year-old husband appears at the beginning of an article in the June 2011 issue of *National Geographic*. The caption of the picture begins by quoting her memory of what it was like two years before, shortly after they married: “Whenever I saw him, I hid. I hated to see him.”

Unfortunately, this is what many people think of when they hear the words, “arranged marriage.” Of course, the marriage described above was arranged, but it was also forced and illegal! Arranged marriages, but not forced marriages, were the norm in many cultures for thousands of years.

Arranged marriages are ones in which someone other than the couple marrying selects the spouses, curtailing the process of courtship. This is done with the consent of those getting married. It becomes a forced marriage if the singles are required to marry against their will. Following is a description of a system of arranged (but not forced) marriage that lasted 500 years.

Japan until mid 20th Century

Arranged marriage was very common in Japan from the 16th century until the last half of the 20th century and still exists

today. The following information comes not only from available written sources but also from missionaries who have served scores of years in Japan observing and participating as go-betweens. The typical procedure was (and is) as follows.

- Parents. When the parents think it is time, usually when their son or daughter is 20-30 years old, they contact “go-betweens” (nakodo) to begin the process. Singles wanting to marry may contact nakodos themselves.
- Go-betweens. Go-betweens may be older individuals or couples who are highly respected people of integrity with many contacts. They may be family, friends, or professional nakodo. From the people they know who are considering marriage the go-betweens select several portfolios, each having a brief personal history (name, age, health, education, social status, etc) and photographs.
- Preliminary Selection. The parents and prospective mates sit down with the go-betweens and eliminate people in which they have no interest. They order the remaining portfolios in terms of desirability, and then they ask the go-betweens to investigate their top choice.
- Full Investigation. The go-betweens then check out “everything” about the chosen person including family lineage, social status, religion, medical and mental illness in the family, criminal records in the family etc. They use everything from available legal records to detective agencies, to neighbors and shopkeepers. Of course, this may cost much money, but the family believes it is worth it to find the best mate.
- Meeting. After both sets of prospective mates and their families have studied the reports and give their approval, the go-between arranges a meeting (miai) between both families. This is usually in a large hotel where they can eat and engage in small talk for a while. Near the end of the meeting, the potential couple move off to spend some time together to get better acquainted.

- Decision. If all goes well at the first meeting, the potential couples continue to meet until they reach a decision. If either the potential bride or groom or one of their families does not think the first meeting or any of the following meetings went well, they can tell the go-betweens later. The go-betweens then let the other family know; both families have saved face, and they go back to preliminary selection.
- Engagement and wedding. If the couples choose to marry, they go through formal betrothal ceremonies, and later weddings. At the weddings the go-betweens walk both bride and groom down the aisle and are part of the ceremony, including standing next to the bride and groom in the family pictures.
- During the marriage. The go-betweens are available to help mediate differences between the husbands and wives if marital disputes arise during the marriages.

Much more information about the whole process is available at

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Miai>

Christian Workers in Japan late 20th Century

During the last half of the 20th century, the Japanese increasingly adopted the Western pattern of courtship with many of the young people choosing their mates on the basis of romance and “love.” However, some of the marriages are still arranged.

Young men and women who convert to Christianity sometimes find their parents are quite unhappy when they become Christian workers. In fact, the parents may refuse to get go-betweens to find spouses for their offspring. These singles then may ask others to be their go-betweens.

Denominational leaders, pastors, and missionaries who teach in Bible schools or seminaries may then be asked to serve as go-betweens. Knowing that they may be asked to do this, professors and administrators at such institutions may observe

singles at their institutions thinking about which ones may make good couples.

When asked to be go-betweens, these missionaries are usually willing to serve. Since asked by the students themselves, the professors usually discuss with both the males and females who they may be matched with. At that point, either of the prospective singles can end the process. If they continue with the relationship, no one else knows. At their first annual conference, the couple’s names are read as being assigned to serve in the same city. That is the announcement to the other students and faculty that they are getting married. Everyone listens intently to assignments!

Arranged Marriages Today

In the 21st century, another type of arranged marriage has been developed, online dating services. Hundreds of such websites exist, and they have many millions of singles from all over the world. Consumer-Rankings.com has rated the top five sites <http://www.consumer-rankings.com/dating/>, and they report that the first month costs \$40-\$60, but the cost per month decreases the longer people continue as members. Criteria for matching vary widely. Their top-rated one was match.com which has 29 million singles.

eHarmony.com, also in the top five, seems to be the most popular among missionaries. This is probably because it emphasizes long-term relationships, was developed by a Christian psychologist teaching at a Christian graduate school, and matches singles on the basis of their answers to several hundred questions on 29 dimensions of compatibility in a research-validated questionnaire. eHarmony has 20 million singles from 200 countries and results in 44,000 weddings each year (120 every day).

Remembering that “arranged marriages are ones in which someone (or something) other than the couple marrying

selects the spouses, curtailing the process of courtship,” here are the corresponding steps.

- Parents. Single missionaries wanting to marry usually contact the go-between themselves. Parents are often not involved.
- Go-betweens. The go-between is a computer program with a database of millions of singles from all over the world who would like to get married.
- Preliminary Selection. All selection is made by the go-between (computer program) with no consultation with either singles or parents.
- Full Investigation. No further investigation is made by the go-between (computer program). All matches are made on the basis of information supplied by the singles themselves when they joined. This information may be biased or even false.
- Meeting. The prospective mates usually make first contact through email or telephone. This may be followed by a Skype conversation before actually meeting in person.
- Decision. If the first communication is positive, the potential couple continues to communicate, to meet, and to date. If the communications do not go well, one or both of the singles stop the process.
- Engagement and Wedding. These events are the responsibility of the couple.

Here are some similarities and differences when using people or computer programs as go-betweens. Some similarities are as follows.

- A wide variety of both people and online dating services are available.
- Both people and websites suggest people who would be a good match.
- Both people and websites provide information.
- Both methods involve payment for services.

- Both methods suggest other possibilities if the first ones do not work out.

Some differences are as follows.

- Human go-betweens are usually hired by parents, but online dating services usually do not involve parents at all.
- Human go-betweens select from a rather small population in a local area, but online dating services have databases of millions of people from around the world.
- Human go-betweens get additional information from a wide variety of sources, but online dating services have only information provided by the persons themselves.
- Human go-betweens initiate and facilitate initial face-to-face meetings, but online services leave those first meetings to singles to make using email, telephone or Skype.
- Human go-betweens have a continuing relationship into the engagement, wedding and marriage, but online dating services provide only the selection.

God uses many means to bring single missionaries who want to marry together. One of those means is arranged marriages whether by people or by websites.

Appendix E

Masturbation

Probably no other sexual topic produces more disagreement among Christians at the present time than masturbation, the deliberate physical sexual stimulation of oneself. A century ago most Christians, and nearly everyone else in Western culture, would have agreed that it was wrong and that people, including single missionaries, should not masturbate.

Ancient rock paintings and other kinds of art as well as early literature from many cultures depict both men and women masturbating. Even the gods in some cultures were depicted as masturbating. Apparently few of these cultures considered it wrong. To find out why this change occurred in Western culture, one needs to consider what brought about this change. Christianity was involved.

What did the Bible say?

The King James Version (KJV) of the Bible appeared in the early 17th century and became widely used. The English words chosen to translate some of the original Greek and Hebrew manuscripts became influential in writing about masturbation.

- Genesis 38: 9-10 (KJV). Onanism: “And Onan knew that

the seed should not be his; and it came to pass, when he went in unto his brother’s wife, that he spilled it on the ground, lest that he should give seed to his brother. And the thing which he did displeased the Lord: wherefore He slew him also.” Early readers of the KJV believed that Onan had masturbated, so they sometimes called it “Onanism” and condemned it as sinful because God had killed Onan for doing it.

- Micah 2:1 (KJV): “Woe to them that devise iniquity, and work evil upon their beds! When the morning is light, they practice it, because it is in the power of their hand.” People who masturbated with their hands in bed in the morning probably projected what they were doing into the particular wording of the KJV. Therefore, masturbation was evil.
- 1 Corinthians 6:9 (KJV): “...abusers of themselves with mankind,” are listed along with adulterers, thieves, and many others as people who will not “inherit the kingdom of God.” Masturbation (self-abuse) would keep people out of the kingdom.

What did people say then?

During the 18th century masturbation was condemned by people in many walks of life throughout Western culture.

- 1716, Dutch theologian, Dr. Balthazar Bekker wrote a pamphlet, “Onania, or the heinous sin of self-pollution, and all its frightful consequences in both sexes.” The pamphlet was published in more than 60 editions in several languages.
- 1760, Swiss physician, Samuel-Auguste Tissot published “L’Onanisme,” a medical treatise saying that the loss of semen through masturbation would cause loss of strength, memory, reason, and vision. It would also cause gout, rheumatism and headaches—along with dozens of other diseases.
- 1797, German philosopher, Immanuel Kant published *Metaphysics of Morals* in which he maintained that “such an

unnatural use of one's sexual attributes ... is a violation of one's duty to himself." Its immorality is because "a man gives up his personality" when he masturbates.

- 19th century: dozens of examples available.
- 1888-1917, Dr John Kellogg was an American physician (to Henry Ford and Thomas Edison), inventor (corn flakes), and educator (American Medical Missionary College). He published multiple editions of *Plain Facts for Old and Young*, devoting 97 pages to the "Secret Vice (Solitary Vice or Self Abuse)."
- 1914, Robert Baden-Powell, Britain, founder of Boy Scouts added a passage in *Scouting for Boys* warning them of the dangers of masturbation. This was gradually changed to saying that to "be prepared," scouts had to avoid wasting vital fluids to conserve their virility, and this warning was not removed until 1945.

Clearly, masturbation was condemned for many reasons. It was considered not only to be immoral, but also to be harmful to people physically, mentally, emotionally, spiritually and in many other ways.

What does the Bible say?

Only during the last half of the 20th century were the three KJV passages understood more correctly. Some of the changes were made earlier, but all the needed changes did not occur until then. The popular New International Version (NIV) made them all when it appeared in 1978.

- Genesis 38: 9-10 (NIV) is changed little, but today people agree that Onan practiced coitus interruptus (a form of birth control), withdrawing before ejaculation, rather than masturbation. What angered God was that Onan failed to carry out the Levirate marriage law (Deuteronomy 25:5-10).
- Micah 2:1(NIV): "Woe to those who plan iniquity, to those who plot evil on their beds! At morning's light they carry it out because it is in their power to do it." This verse refers

to evil in general being planned at night and carried out during the day.

- 1 Corinthians 6:9 (KJV): "homosexual offenders" are listed along with adulterers, thieves, and many others as those who will not "inherit the kingdom of God." Nothing is said about people abusing themselves.

The fact is that the Bible says nothing about masturbation. Even most people who believe that masturbation is sinful agree that the Bible says nothing specific about it. They typically attempt to interpret general verses about evil as applying to masturbation specifically.

What do people say now?

By the middle of the twentieth century physicians and psychologists believed that masturbation caused neither physical nor mental illness. Rather than seeing it as harmful, people began encouraging masturbation. They said that it felt good, was legal, was always available, was not hazardous to health, and released tension to help avoid premarital sex.

Since the Bible does not mention masturbation, and since modern medicine has not found it harmful to health, modern Christians have come to many different conclusions about masturbation. In fact, by 1975 they had taken two extreme positions as well as ones in between.

- 1968, "Masturbation—Gift of God." This is a chapter title in *The Stork is Dead* by Charlie Shedd. He noted that perhaps past generations were just blind to the truth, that masturbation may simply be the "wise provision of a very wise Creator" who "gave it to us because he knew we'd need it." He advised teens to thank God for it and to use it as a blessing.
- 1971, Masturbation—sometimes sinful, sometimes not. In *Sexual Understanding Before Marriage*, Herbert Miles has chapter sections on "When is masturbation sinful?" and "When is masturbation not sinful?" He concludes that

though masturbation may be sinful in some cases, when practiced on a limited, temporary basis for the purpose of self-control, guided by Christian principles, and with no evil results, it is acceptable.

- 1973, “Masturbation Is Sin.” This is a chapter section title in *The Christian Counselor’s Manual* by Jay Adams. Agreeing that the Bible has no direct references to masturbation, Adams maintains that it is sinful for four reasons: (1) In 1 Corinthians 6:12 Paul notes that he would not be brought under the power of anything. Some people are unable to control their masturbation; therefore, it is sin. (2) In Matthew 5:27-28 Jesus says that sexual fantasy is adultery. Many people fantasize during masturbation; therefore, it is sin. (3) The Bible does not present masturbation as a sexual option; therefore it is sin. (4) Adams says that masturbation is a perversion of the sexual act; therefore, it is sin.

Obviously Christians do not agree about the rightness or wrongness of masturbation. As is often the case when the Bible does not say anything specifically about a topic, Christians reach many different conclusions about it.

Conclusions

Although masturbation has been practiced in many cultures for thousands of years, the Bible does not even mention it. Although for a couple centuries many Christians reading the KJV interpreted three passages as being about masturbation, now most people agree that the Bible says nothing. What are single missionaries to do?

- Related things tend to happen when people masturbate, so Jay Adams’ first two points need to be taken very seriously. If single missionaries are not able to control masturbation, it is a problem (1 Corinthians 6:12). If they are engaging in lustful fantasy (Matthew 5:27-28) during masturbation, it is sin.

- Masturbation is usually not physically harmful to an individual. It does not cause all of the debilitating illnesses attributed to it during the last two centuries. However, single missionaries need to be aware that some forms of it may lead to physical damage or sexual dysfunction. See details on WebMD at <http://men.webmd.com/features/masturbation-5-things-you-didnt-know>
- We must be careful about loading guilt on people about masturbation. Condemning them for something not mentioned in Scripture should not be done.
- If masturbation is done in public or interferes with social contact or daily life, we need to help the person overcome this practice.

Best Sources

This book was written as a series of brochures to make available to singles. The brochures are limited to what will print on two sides of a sheet of paper, so few references to primary sources (except Scripture) are given. Some people have asked for a list of the best sources.

Grace Wyshak and Rose Frisch wrote “Evidence for a secular trend in age of menarche in the *New England Journal of Medicine* 1982, Volume 306, pages 1033-1035. They reviewed 218 studies in Europe and the USA covering 220,037 women conducted between 1795 and 1981. They found that the age of a woman’s first menstrual period (related to puberty) declined greatly during those two centuries. This journal is available in many larger libraries, and a brief summary is in the New York Times at <http://www.nytimes.com/1982/05/11/science/science-watch-earlier-menstruation.html> .

Robert Bremner edited a five-volume series of primary sources related to the changes that took place in the status of youth in America during the time that adolescence was invented. The first two volumes are a great source of material actually written while it was taking place.

Bremner, R. H. (Ed.). (1970) *Children & youth in America: A documentary history. Vol I: 1600-1865*. Cambridge, NY: Harvard University Press.

Bremner, R. H. (Ed.). (1971) *Children & youth in America: A documentary history. Vol II: 1866-1932*. Cambridge, NY: Harvard University Press.

The best sources of data are usually those gathered by the government. In the USA the U. S. Census Bureau has a wide variety of statistics about many things at <http://www.census.gov/>. The most valuable of these over the years since 1878 are the annual editions of the *Statistical Abstract of the United States* at <http://www.census.gov/compendia/statab/>. These are available online free of charge. In the UK the best source is the Office for National Statistics at <http://www.statistics.gov.uk/hub/>

About the Author

Ron and Bonnie, his wife, taught for 35 years in Christian colleges as well as in public and Christian elementary schools. Bonnie taught elementary school as well as teacher education at the college level, and Ron taught psychology at the undergraduate level in college. Our three children are all married and have families of their own. As member care consultants with GO InterNational of Wilmore, KY, we are now retired and, as volunteers, we provide member care for missionaries. We are not licensed health care professionals, but we emphasize care, encouragement, growth, and prevention of problems rather than treatment of severe problems. We provide such care to anyone, anytime, and anywhere at no charge for our time, usually providing our own transportation to the nearest airport and asking that those we are helping provide ground transportation, lodging, and food. Rather than working as professionals for pay, we provide member care as amateurs in the original sense of the word—out of love rather than for money. We have a mailing list of about 175 prayer supporters as well as about 55 financial supporters.

We do whatever we can to help missionaries. We do not belong to any sending agency but help others as someone with no official connection to their agency. Listed below are things we are currently doing, but we are always open to new ways to help. Let us begin with the most general forms of help,

continue with helping missionaries through their years of service, and end with specific ministries.

Websites. We have two websites, www.missionarycare.com and www.crossculturalworkers.com. Both websites contain brochures and books which people anywhere in the world can visit to read, download, print, copy and distribute the information free of charge to anyone who can use it. www.missionarycare.com freely uses the term “missionary” and is easily found when people search for missionary care. www.crossculturalworkers.com never uses the term “missionary” so that anyone working in a culture where accessing material on missionaries would endanger their ministry can visit freely.

Brochures. Both websites contain 87 “brochures” on topics relevant to living in other cultures and working as missionaries. These brochures may be downloaded as .pdf files and distributed to anyone as long as they given to others free of charge.

E-books. Both websites contain E-books which can be downloaded free of charge by anyone, anytime, anywhere.

- *What Missionaries Ought to Know...: A Handbook for Life and Service* is a compilation of many of the brochures about missionary life.
- *Psychology for Missionaries* which considers implications of general psychology for missionaries.
- *Missionary Marriage Issues* is a compilation of many of the brochures about married life on the field.
- *Missionary Singles Issues* is a compilation of many of the brochures about single life on the field.
- *Before you get “Home”: Preparing for Reentry* is written for use several months before returning.

- *Coming “Home”: The Reentry Transition* can be used as preparation for debriefing in a group, when being debriefed, or to debrief yourself.
- *Reentry after Short-Term Missionary Service* is for people serving from a week to a couple years.
- *We’re Going Home: Reentry for Elementary Children* is a story and activities for children 6-12 years of age.
- *I Don’t Want to Go Home: Parent’s Guide for Reentry for Elementary Children* is a companion book written specifically for parents to help them assist in their children’s reentry.
- *Third Culture Kids and Adolescence: Cultural Creations* is written specifically for adolescent TCKs but is also applicable to other adolescents.
- *Understanding Adolescence* is a companion book written specifically for parents of adolescents.
- *Raising Resilient MKs: Resources for Caregivers, Parents, and Teachers* was edited by Joyce Bowers and first published by ACSI in 1998.

Database. A database with more than 880 references to published material about missionary member care is on www.missionarycare.com. Those visiting this database can find reading lists or annotated bibliographies on any of more than 100 topics. They can also find lists of materials published by particular authors.

Missionary Care by Radio. Trans World Radio broadcasts in 180 languages to reach people through radio. TWR has begun a daily 15-minute program in English with broadcasts reaching from Central Asia through North Africa, and you can find out more by visiting www.membercareradio.com. TWR is adapting the brochures to a format suitable for broadcast to let Christians working in this area of the world know that they are neither alone nor forgotten.

Orientation. In an effort to decrease attrition, we participate in the training of new missionaries. We have made presentations on expectations, generational differences, moral purity, and conflict resolution. Of course, during our time at orientation we are available to talk privately with any missionary candidates who want to see us.

Seminars. We present information on various topics to a variety of missionary groups. We have done seminars on third culture kids, leadership, generational differences, conflict, anger, adolescence, maintaining mental and physical health, maintaining sexual purity, and psychology from a Christian perspective. We have made these presentations to groups as varied as the entire missionary force of one agency, missionaries on a field, seminary students, university students, field directors, national pastors, retirees, and appointees.

Missionaries in Our Home. Missionaries have stopped by our home to discuss issues that concern them. We have talked with individuals and couples about a variety of topics ranging from grief to interpersonal relationships to debriefing when they return to the states. These are often people who have met us in larger group settings such as conferences, retreats, orientations, seminars, or perhaps discovered us on our web page.

Missionaries on the Field (from Our Home). Missionaries serving on their fields are unable to stop by our home, so we have communicated with them in a variety of ways. Of course, telephone conversations are always helpful, and long distance rates between most countries are now quite reasonable. E-mail is free, but the time between sending a message and receiving a reply may be rather long. Skype is free and instantaneous.

On-Site Visits. At the invitation of missionaries, we visit them on the field to help them cope with various issues. We do this only if everyone involved wants us to come, and we have the blessing of the mission agency. At these times we have talked with individuals, couples, and groups of missionaries. We are not sent by the agency, but go only when invited by the missionaries themselves.

Care of Missionaries in a Geographical Area. We want to provide care for missionaries from several different agencies in a given place. We go on a regular basis to the same missionaries so that they will get to know us and feel free to talk with us, rather than just going to help in a crisis situation. We visit Bolivia whenever invited, usually talking with 30-35 missionaries from about five different mission agencies each time.

Reentry. We facilitate reentry retreats for missionaries in transition as they return to the USA. This includes a group debriefing as we talk for two days about where they have been, where they are now and where they are going.

Missionary Kids. Since we live near a college that has a rather large number of TCKs, we were very involved with them while we were teaching at the college. Of course, now that we are retired and travel more, we are unable to keep up the same active relationship. However, we do let them know that we are available to help them however we can, and they contact us for everything from taxes to borrowing things to personal problems.